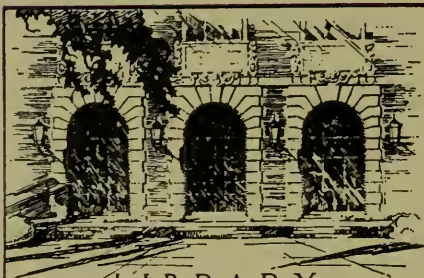


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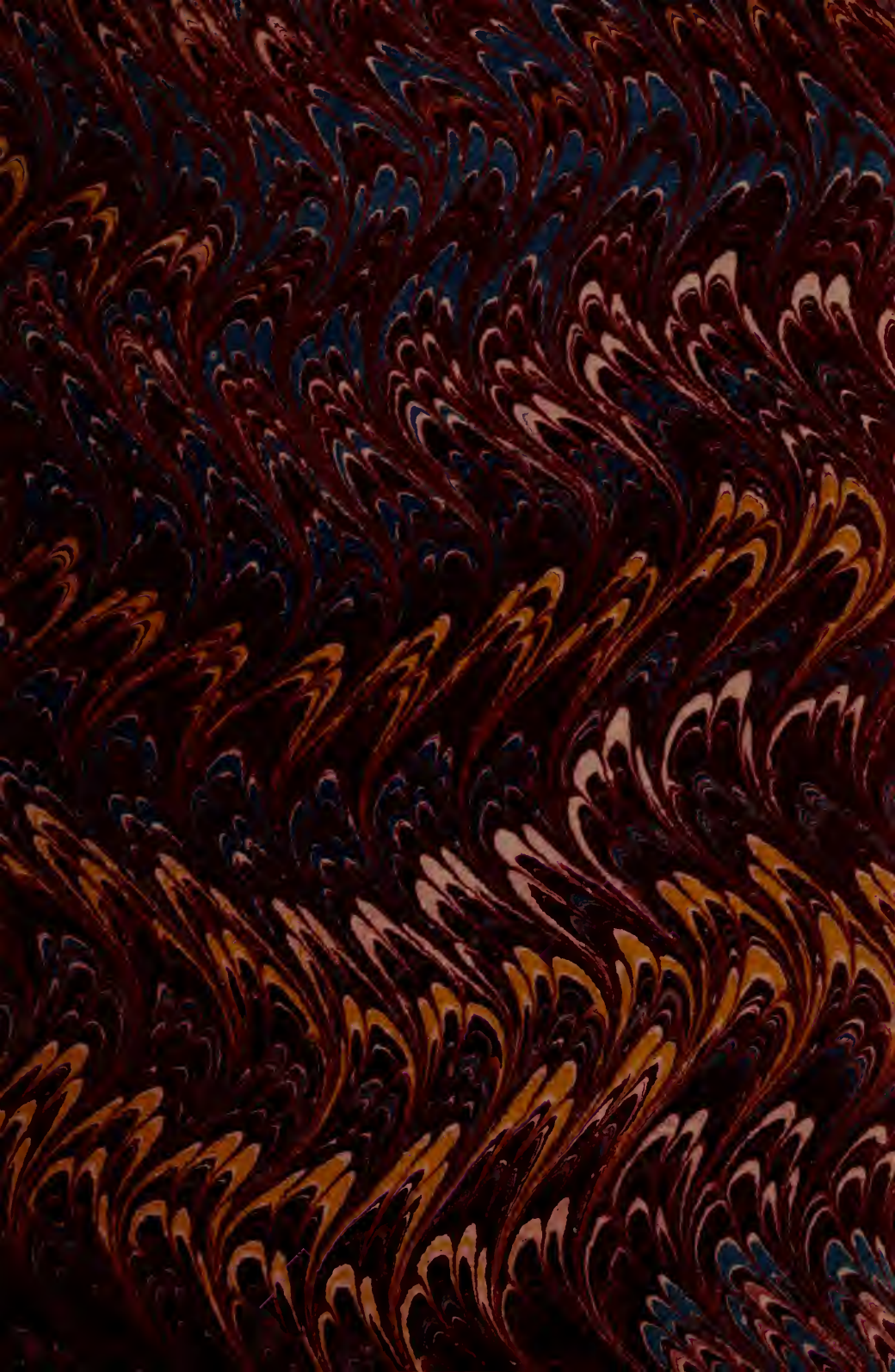


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I V Y :
COUSIN AND BRIDE.

VOL. III.

IVY:
COUSIN AND BRIDE.

BY

PERCY GREG

AUTHOR OF

“ACROSS THE ZODIAC,” “ERRANT,”

&c., &c.

“For Love himself took part against himself.”

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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THE THIRD VOLUME.

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I V Y.



CHAPTER I.

WIFE AND WARD.

ABOUT a week after the funeral, Ethert came unexpectedly into the drawing-room, where its mistress was alone.

“Ivy,” he said, his face half turned from her, “will you pardon my asking you to give me half an hour alone with Meta this morning? Perhaps, if you will not mind it, she had best come to me in the study; it will be easier and less trying to her, I think, that she should hear what I have to say at first hand from me.”

“What is the matter, Ethert? You are not going to scold her now, whatever she has done?”

“I never scolded Pearl in her life, Ivy; but once, by the way, when she nearly drowned us

both. What is the matter? Nothing that you may not hear if you choose, nothing but what she must repeat if you desire her, very little indeed beyond what I should tell you if she did not. But still I think, if you do not object, you had better let me speak to her alone in the first instance."

"Ethert, if you would only tell me what I do to make you speak in this way! No, you never find fault—I wish you would; but you always make me feel in fault, feel that you expect me to behave so ill. Can you think that I wonder what you have to say to Meta, or why you want her to yourself? I have not dared to say it, but I have so wished this last week that you would talk to her. Of course you can sympathise with each other in this sorrow as I hardly can, though I feel so much for both of you. I cannot comfort her or you as you could each other. It does seem hard on her that she should be left to me, that you never seem to want her, never think how she must miss your kindness after you had made so much of her for years, ever since she can remember; and now, when she feels so sadly alone. I like her very

much; I wish she could, would be better friends with me; but we were only together twice, and then only a day or two at a time for a few weeks—and of course she feels strange with me. And, Ethert, I don't suppose you could see it, but it is a little hard on me."

"On you? I am very sorry if Meta has been a burden on you. Remember, I did not ask you to invite her, and I will take care she does not trouble you long—though——"

"Ethert!" she broke out, for once interrupting him in her passion of distress and perplexity, "why is it you never understand me? Is it my fault? But it is only now, only since—Before, I could always make you see what I meant, I never had to try; you never used to misunderstand me like this. Am I so heartless? Meta and I were friends long before; was I not glad to have her? Or is it that I ought not to have wished for a companion when you are so much away? And, now she is in sorrow, would I not take any trouble, if only I knew how to comfort her? And, if I did not love her for herself, she is *your* Pearl; it was you who first brought her to see me, and

said, 'Be kind to my little orphan for my sake. Have you forgotten? Or do you think I forget that?'

"Is she trying to be better than a woman can be?" wondered Ethert. "Or is she only striving unconsciously to deceive herself?"

"Ethert," she went on, "don't you understand that it is hard even on me to see, to feel what she thinks? I see her wistful look when she knows you are at home and alone, when you come in and leave us and scarcely speak to her. I know how happy, how comforted she would be if I were to say, 'Meta, I think Ethert would like to have you for awhile.' I know she thinks I might send her to you, that it is my place,—your first words made her think so much of that,—that it is I who will not, or do not remember. It seems so unkind of me, and I must not tell her that I dare not interfere. I tried to leave her with you, but you have always gone away at once, and I have thought you were not pleased. And now, how can you fancy I want to know? Do you think I stand between you; or how could I ask, and ask *her*, what you have said? She is your charge, not

mine ; except so far as you will let me love her, let her be something to me because she was your mother's, because she has been so much to you."

"Thank you, Ivy," he said, earnestly. Yet the thanks, though coming from the heart and warmly spoken, were but a fresh wound to her. "I thank you sincerely, heartily, for my own sake, and still more for Meta's. If you will be kind to her now and then, if you will try to do what no one else now can—not to let her feel that she has lost everything—you could do me no greater kindness. You must see how hard it is on her, even if you cannot understand, if I cannot expect you to own how *I* must feel it; how difficult, how painful it is to give up a charge that was one of duty as well as affection—to be forced almost to ill-use her."

Ivy certainly could not understand, and would have missed his meaning entirely but for the suppressed bitterness, the ring of real, intense pain in the tone of his last words. For in this Ethert was perfectly sincere and loyal. It was the wrong to another, the enforced betrayal of a trust, that wounded him so keenly.

In marrying, he had made up his mind at once to the sacrifice, in thought as in fact, of all his dreams of the future, of the present pleasure he felt in the mutual affection between himself and Meta. But now, when dependent wholly on himself, the cruelty to her—the injustice of taking from her the protection that was or seemed her right, on which at any rate she had been taught to rely—was far more bitter than any personal sacrifice could have been. The sense of her unhappiness, her helpless misery, and the consciousness that she must think him heartless, stung him to the quick.

“Ethert, what is it? No, you would not, you cannot, give up your charge, your duty to Meta. It would break her heart as well as yours. I know you cannot mean that, and I won’t ask what you do mean. I will send her to you at once; only, Ethert, you are so bitter in pain and sorrow—don’t let her feel that. I know what it is; but she is so sensitive, and she has no one else.”

Ethert’s interview with Meta lasted longer than he had anticipated. He had intended to avoid any immediate encounter with Ivy after-

wards ; aware perhaps of his inability to control that bitterness of which she had too truly spoken, if forced to any conversation with her at a moment especially bitter. But it happened that, before he could leave the house for the evening, he was obliged to return for a few minutes to the drawing-room where Ivy was ; and though he spoke but few words, and these mere matter of course, avoiding to look at her as he spoke, she was keenly alive to the cold, hard ring of his voice, the disturbed, clouded face, still more the stern expression of resolute endurance perceptible alike in tone, look, and manner. She would, a month ago, have been simply pained and frightened thereby ; now, she had learnt better how to read the countenance of one who inherited from his mother's house the characteristic trait, described by a famous social observer in words that had become a family proverb—perhaps a family boast—"A Vipont meets sorrow like a personal enemy."

Ethert's perverse introduction still hindered and chilled the intimacy of the two girls. Provoking the one to studied formality, it intensified the painful shyness and timidity that veiled

the deep personal tenderness, the warm affection, the gentle compassion and eager sympathy of the other. Without such warning, Meta would have been quick to feel that her guardian's wife, placed by her marriage, as it were, almost on his own level of age and authority, was not her childlike companion of three years ago. Far too proud and sensitive ever in any circumstances to expose herself to humiliation by assuming a position that might be denied her, she would certainly have given Ivy all the deference that rank and matronhood could claim, till invited to resume her former intimacy. After Ethert's pointed hint, which she resolutely ascribed to Ivy's influence, if not to her inspiration, Meta's respect had worn an air of almost vindictive punctiliousness. Neither ungracious nor ungrateful, she had contrived to make Ivy's kindness appear, even to Ivy herself, the patronage of superior age and station, rather than the familiar tenderness of a friend. Her reserve had re-acted on Ivy; and the latter now shrank from going at once to her guest, as if it might seem more like curiosity than sympathy.

Perfectly free from the slightest taint of inquisitive or jealous feeling, Ivy could never have dreamed that either her husband or his ward could fancy her desirous of invading their confidence, till Ethert's own apologies seemed to take for granted feelings of which she knew herself incapable. Fear of misconstruction checked the natural impulses of feminine sympathy and sisterly interest, till more than an hour had passed, and Meta did not appear, even when she should have joined her hostess at the tea-table. Then Ivy forgot all such apprehensions in the stronger, more real fear lest the orphan girl should feel herself neglected. Shy as she was by nature and habit—rendered tenfold more so by the absence of ease and confidence in her domestic life, the incessant fear of displeasing one who would never express displeasure—no selfish or self-conscious feeling could countervail her paramount instinct of considerate kindness to others; and for Meta consideration was softened and deepened into anxious tenderness. She would not let the servant carry her message, but went herself to seek her young guest, first in the library, and

then in her own room. The door was fastened, and her first tap was unnoticed; to the second Meta answered, but in a voice that seemed tremulous and broken.

“May I not come in, Meta? I only came to tell you that tea is ready. Will you not come down?”

“I beg your pardon,” the girl answered from within; “I will come down in one minute, if you will excuse me.”

Not one but many minutes had Ivy waited; and, convinced by the voice and manner that her first apprehension had been true, that Meta was in distress and sorrow, that her interview with Ethert had, for some reason or other, been bitterly painful, the young hostess was about again to seek her friend, again to plead for admission, when Meta at last appeared. Her eyes were fixed on the ground, and she spoke in a low voice, and with something like an effort, though with forced steadiness, her apology for delay. But when—sure now of the truth, and yielding to the impulse of affectionate compassion for one so young, so lonely, in which reserve and shyness were simply forgotten—

Ivy took her by the hand and drew her to a seat on her own sofa, Meta's self-command gave way, and she burst into a flood of tears.

"What is it? What is the matter, dearest? I don't want you to tell me anything you do not wish to say; but can I not help or comfort you? Meta, if Ethert has said anything that seems hard, if he has—he said he would not—if he has seemed to find fault with you, do not grieve in this way. You know he cannot, he would not for worlds be unkind to you; and it would grieve him bitterly to think that he had distressed you so much."

"Sir Ethert," said Meta, and Ivy was struck by the use of the title, though in her presence Meta had carefully avoided the old familiar form—"Sir Ethert is always as kind as he can be, but—of course I ought to have expected it—but—and I am sure it did grieve him very much. Don't tell him, please, Lady Glynne. I ought not to have given way, but it was all I could do to command myself before him; and, if you had not been so kind, I should have borne it better now."

"Meta, may you not tell me what it is, what

Ethert has said? He cannot have meant to hurt you; and can you not, will you not, treat me as a friend? will you not remember, and speak to me as you used three years ago? If we are both older than then, Meta, the change is greater to you than to me; and surely you need not mark as you do that it *is* three years since we were friends and playmates? Can you not understand that it hurts me, is hardly kind to me, when Ethert's favourite and my own companion of old treats me as a stranger might do—speaks as girls are never used to speak to one another? Do trust me, Meta; let me know what grieves you so. Ethert said you might tell me; but I would never have asked you if it had not made you unhappy. I only ask that you will give me the power to comfort you."

She had drawn the young girl close to her, and, almost timidly, had laid her hand as she spoke on the long, dishevelled, tawny locks, and kissed the broad open brow. It pained her that Meta, though she nowise repelled, would not seem to return the caress. But she was surprised and almost startled when, feeling

perhaps that she could not refuse to express her sense of intended kindness, yet could not utter it in words, Meta, half turning from her, took in her own and kissed the hand that rested on her head.

“What is it, dear?” Ivy said again, after a pause of a minute or two. “Surely you may tell me some part at least of what grieves you?”

“You know, of course, all that Sir Ethert has said—at least, all that signifies,” Meta answered at last, “what he intends, what arrangements he has made. And that is all. It is wrong and foolish of me to grieve in this way. And you will not tell him?”

“You are not afraid of Ethert, Meta?”

“Afraid? No. But he is grieved already, and I should not like him to know how much it hurt me, because he cannot help it.”

“Help what, dear? I cannot think of anything which should give you so much pain, that Ethert would not try to spare you, or that he cannot if he will. If you fancy you have displeased or grieved him, you may be sure it is mere fancy. Have I not known all these years

—better, perhaps, than you—how much he has thought and cared to please and spare you, how much all your troubles as a child troubled him, though he could not say so to you?”

“I have no right—I ought to have none—it must be. But it is almost the very thing he was so kind, so careful, to spare me years ago, and it seems—but of course he cannot help it. But, Lady Glynne, if I seem so weak, so foolish—I am an orphan, I had nothing else in the world, and it is——” She broke down again, and Ivy, quick by sympathy to perceive pain, not intellectually quick enough to divine its cause, was as much perplexed as ever.

“But, Meta, if you feel, as you must feel, very keenly what you have lost, yet can you not trust to Ethert’s affection? And can you not believe that I can do something to make up to you; and will do all I can, for your own sake as well as for his? Can you not think you will be, in the end, as happy with us as with her?”

Meta started.

“Then you do *not* know, Lady Glynne—yes, but you must, as I ought to have known—

what Sir Ethert has told me this afternoon?"

"I have no idea, Meta. But of this you may be very sure, that you shall miss nothing that Ethert or I can repair." She paused, as it suddenly struck her that Meta's grief over the loss of her protectress, though natural and sincere, had not been so passionate, so inconsolable, and that this was a newly-caused and probably self-regarding outburst of sorrow. "I cannot understand, Meta. Is there something new, something since your loss, that has so grieved you?"

"Ah! but think, Lady Glynne, what a loss it is! It is all—home, his care, his kindness as well. And I am very foolish. Other girls, I know, are not afraid of school, but I have always been; and I think she would have sent me, if he had not known that before. I wish he had let her, now."

Ivy began to guess rather than to understand the cause of Meta's distress, but remained for the moment wholly incredulous.

"You cannot mean, Meta—I am sure you are wrong—that Ethert would send you to school now?"

"Of course, Lady Glynne. What else could

he do? But I ought . . . but it took me by surprise. I had not thought—forgive me, I never meant to let you see——”

“I am sure you must be—you are mistaken,” Ivy began; then checked herself. Sure as she had felt at first, felt even now, what Ethert’s real wish must be, she had no such trust in her own knowledge as could warrant so positive an assurance, no such hold on his confidence as could give her a right to promise even intervention, intercession, much less the reversal of a sentence actually pronounced. “Are you sure, Meta? I can hardly believe it.”

“Sure, of course, Lady Glynne. And, as I say, I ought to have known it must be.”

“I don’t see why. But, Meta, you know Ethert must decide such a question. But I cannot—at any rate, darling, you must feel, you are sure I do not wish it?”

“You do not?” Meta said, looking up suddenly, with a change of expression and tone, an evident incredulous astonishment, that at first simply surprised, and presently, as she came to realize its meaning, deeply pained her companion.

“You thought it was my doing—mine! You thought, Meta—you thought that I——”

Meta’s distrust, Meta’s evident belief in her selfishness, or in some other still less creditable feeling, was painful enough to one who had never had an unkind thought for a fellow-creature—much less for an orphan child, so sensitive, so dependent, so solitary, with whose feelings she could sympathise so profoundly. But there was more than this. What had *Ethert* felt? what had he thought, that could prompt or force him to inflict such pain on one he had loved so dearly, pain that he himself must feel at least as keenly? And Meta, startled by the sudden silence, preceded by so marked a change of tone, looking once more into her friend’s face, saw the lip quiver, the eyes full of tears there was scarcely power to repress.

“You are sorry for me,” she said. “But, Lady Glynne, it is quite right. It would of course be your wish, and could not but be his, now. I know I ought to have thought of that before; I ought never, and I never meant, to let you know how foolish I was. But you were

so kind, you spoke so tenderly, I could not help it."

"Darling, I can say nothing that can much comfort you till I see and talk to Ethert. But, Meta, will you not believe me that this has taken me no less by surprise than yourself?"

There was something of persistent incredulity, renewed mistrust in Meta's look—she did not attempt to answer in words—that again much hurt Ivy; but the latter was too just not to understand how difficult her companion must find it to believe that, especially on such a subject, the wife had not been in her husband's confidence.

"I assure you, Meta, it is so. The thought is quite new to me, and very painful. I had been so glad to have you here; and if only you would have been the same as before, if you would speak to me as you used, if we might be Ivy and Pearl to each other—I thought I might call you by the name that Ethert always gave you, but I could not now when you——"

"Don't you remember?" Meta answered, completely won by Ivy's kindly sympathy; quite understanding how entirely anything like re-

serve or coolness between them had been of her own causing, and anxious to make amends for unspoken doubts and silent unkindness. "Don't you remember? It was Sir Ethert's own words that reminded me you were no longer a girl like myself, and how I ought to speak to you. I only obeyed his hint."

"He did not mean *that*," Ivy said, feeling, however unreasonably, quite sure on this point what had been her husband's intention. "I was sorry he spoke exactly in that way, Meta; but, after all these years, I do think you might take Ethert's kindness to you for granted, might be sure that he never means a thought, a word that can hurt you more than girls—yes, Meta, and girls older than you—must expect to be hurt now and then by the reproofs we draw upon ourselves. Where you are conscious of no fault, you may be very sure he never means to mortify or vex you. And *that* is the very last thing Ethert would have thought or wished. His own title is a vexation rather than a satisfaction to him; and can you not understand how I dislike mine, when I have all my life been used to hear it given to

my mother? At least, I ought not to hear it from you, in whom I hoped and expected to find a sister, as I have never had one. But you believe me, Meta, do you not? This was no thought, no wish of mine. Then, if you believe me, kiss me, darling; and be sure, if we cannot change Ethert's mind, it will grieve me—as much, I think, as yourself.”

“Ethert,” Ivy said, next morning after breakfast, when, at a sign from her, Meta had left them alone, speaking with as much firmness of tone as she could command, doubtful as she felt of the manner in which her intercession might be received; so fearing to provoke her husband's silent displeasure that only regard for another would have given her courage to enter on the subject—the more fearful that she knew Ethert's feeling to be so deeply involved, and instinctively shrank from encountering that bitterness which was apt to overflow on others from the bitterness of his own pain—“you are not in a hurry yet, are you? I do want you to listen to me, and to try to understand this time.”

“I should be very sorry, Ivy, to seem neglectful of your right to the little time we can spend together, and if there were other claims upon it, they must wait when you really desire my attention. And if I do misunderstand you—and it is far less often than you seem to think—I must own the fault lies entirely with myself.”

“But, Ethert, you will not be angry if I—if I seem to ask you to change—if I wonder at—I am sorry for what you seem to have done or intended? I never asked you to change your mind about anything yet. *Do* consider now; I can hardly believe that you have told Meta she is to go to school.”

“And why not, Ivy? What else could I well tell her? I could not expect you to burden yourself with such a charge, even if you thought, or I, that it would not be in more than one respect a very serious trouble.”

“Ethert, do you think I do not wish, wish before all things, to please you, to spare you pain? Do you think I should not be very, very sorry that you should do what I know you hate to do, should cause pain you will feel

even more than she to one you cannot bear to hurt, for my sake—if it were for mine? Even if it were a trouble to me, is it kind to think I would not take trouble for you, and never even to ask me?”

“I know, Ivy, how anxious you always are to give me comfort or pleasure, how little you would think of yourself, or measure what it cost you; and for that reason I am the more bound to consider you, and never to ask what you would not like to refuse. Meta has no claim on you, and I—of all things, perhaps, that is the last that I ought to ask or expect from you.”

“I cannot understand, Ethert. Anything that you feel so deeply about, you might surely expect from your wife. You might well have taken it for granted. But surely it was hard to take for granted that I would not do my part, that I should be undutiful to you and most unkind to her?”

“I did not think you either the one or the other, Ivy. I did not doubt that, if I had asked you to let Meta remain, you would have yielded, and yielded without a word or a look to

mark your annoyance. But you would have felt, and justly felt, that I had no right to make any such demand upon your complaisance, that you ought to have the power of refusal. If I had a better right to rely upon your kindness, I do not think a husband should ever ask what a wife would be justified in refusing; and, if I could ask a favour of you, this would be the last I could dream of asking."

"Do you think, Ethert, it is pleasant for me to be reminded how terrible a sacrifice you have made; to feel every day more and more how absolute that sacrifice was, how much it has cost you, and never to be allowed in any way, I do not say to repay the least part of it, but to show that I am grateful for it? Is it kind not to allow me to do anything for you, who have done so much for me and mine?"

"The sacrifice, Ivy, was perhaps in every way, certainly in all that you can understand, harder on you than on me; and assuredly I will never make it the ground, the pretext of a demand on your kindness. If I had a sister of my own, I would not ask such a favour for her—of you. As it is, whatever Meta's claim may be

upon my kindness, it does not extend, as under other circumstances a sister's might have done, to you."

"I cannot see how that can be, Ethert. Surely every claim, and especially a girl's claim, upon a man must be quite as much a claim on his wife? But please do not speak of claims; will you not believe that I wish, wish more than for any other thing you could give me, to do this for you? Will you not allow it?"

"No, Ivy. You shall never make a sacrifice for me that I can prevent, and this least of all."

Bitterly disappointed—for her first deepest, most earnest interest in the question, though she was hardly aware that it was so, was to give some proof of affection and regard for her husband, to render some kindness that he would feel as such, however she might regard it as a simple act of conjugal duty—Ivy felt that she must shift her ground; that, resolved to accept nothing from her, this *was*, for some reason, the last thing that he would receive as a favour to himself.

"Ethert, when you speak in that way you make me feel again how little you understand

me! But this time I know it is my fault. I have spoken—I did not mean it—as if I should give up something, should sacrifice, or, at least, should be doing something only for your sake; and you must know that is not true, so you may well be angry with me for seeming to put it in that way. Indeed, I did not mean it. You know I love Meta, your Pearl, very dearly—will you not let me call her by the name you gave her? You let me years ago—and it will grieve me more than I can say to let her go. Not only that; I know it tortures you, I know you will never look at me kindly when you remember that I have cost you *that*. But that is not all—that is not the way I ought to have said it. If you did not care, if only it would not annoy you, I should wish to have her, to keep her here. Do you—you will not be displeased—you know I am alone so much?”

“Yes, Ivy, and I am very sorry for it. Remember, whenever you will return to Glynnehurst——”

“Ethert! I never did say such a thing, and I hardly like now; but—do you think I have any right, any claim—that there is anything due to

my feelings—any consideration I may fairly expect? Perhaps not; but if you do—if I may ask anything because I am a woman, because I am your wife—if you have any pity, any respect for me—never say *that* to me again, as you have said it before. I should not like to seem to complain—I suppose I ought not to feel an insult in anything you think fit to say or do; but that does wound, sting, shame me—I am afraid no other word will make you understand—it does insult me as nothing else could do. You say so often you can accept nothing, because you have given me nothing but your hand, your name—well, *that* means to take them away, and tell all the world you have done so! No; if you speak of that I cannot say another word! Ethert, if you have any feeling for me, any regard for the cousin you did seem fond of, any consideration for her to whom you gave the name of wife—never, never again speak to me of——”

The passionate indignation of the first outburst was soon controlled; she spoke low and quietly, but quite clearly; her voice, despite a certain tremulous quiver of repressed emotion,

was calm and steady, and there was in its tones a firm, resolute emphasis he had never heard before. For a full minute he could not reply in words; only he bent his head silently, in involuntary submission to a demand it was impossible to dispute or trifle with.

"I beg your pardon, Ivy," he said at last, simply and earnestly. "I did not wish to wound you; assuredly I never dreamt of insulting your gentle, generous patience by—what to another woman would have seemed simple justice. But while you feel so differently, I am very sorry I spoke; and I will not wilfully offend again. It would be unpardonable in me to repeat a single word that sounds in your ears like affront or unkindness."

Ivy had been too deeply stung, too thoroughly roused, for fear or constraint; but her words once spoken, the indignant impulse exhausted, she felt how far she had gone, expected rebuke or anger, and was simply grateful for the frank, almost kindly admission of her claim. She did not know how to answer; but there was a happier, more confident tone in her voice as she renewed her petition.

“Then, Ethert, you know I am so much alone, and must be—it should not displease you, should it? Other wives wish for society, companionship, and their husbands do not think on that account they are discontented. Now, I have no friend, no real friend, except Meta—may I not have her with me?”

“Surely, Ivy, I could never complain that you find your solitude irksome; but as surely Meta is the last companion who would relieve it. Ask your mother to come to us if you please.”

“Never, Ethert! I love Mamma, but I would rather be alone, quite alone, than bring her here now; and I could have, I could bear no hired companion, no stranger. No, Meta is the only one; and I do so wish, so long to have her; one besides you whom I love, one whom perhaps some day I might persuade to be fond of me.”

“Ivy,” he said, feeling the last touching words, and all they implied, to render resolute resistance all but impossible, “if you asked for any companion who would be nothing else, who would give you help and comfort, not

trouble and vexation, I should be bound, and I should be glad to further your wish at once. But a child—or something worse than a child, a girl who is just past simple nursery or school-room management, whom you will not quite like to dismiss when she is in the way, whom you must watch, educate, control, and yet who cannot be simply handed over to a governess, or coerced at once when she gives trouble—what you are asking is not real companionship, but an anxious and troublesome charge.”

“I shall not feel it so; and do not speak of her in that way, Ethert. She is scarcely more of a child than I; in intelligence, in character, less so perhaps, or less than I was a few months ago. And you do not suppose I mean—I think of treating her as a child, as other than a friend and sister? I don’t expect or wish her to obey, to look up to me—of course she can’t. But no lady grown up and better informed than myself—no one else—could be half so true a companion, so real a friend to me as Meta; and at any rate, Ethert, there is no one else I could bear. Will you not let me have her? I would not ask it if I thought it would be disagreeable

to you ; I know, I know so well it is, would be almost as great a pleasure to you to see her here, or even to know she was here, as to me ; and I do dread the thought of parting with her."

"Ivy, if you will not believe me, ask your mother, ask any lady, whether you can take any child of Meta's age—much more a wilful, wayward, sensitive girl, whose temper, however I might be amused by or sympathise with it, sorely tried my mother's patience, without having constantly to control, and now and then in your own despite to reprove her."

"Ethert, if you will pardon me, I would rather not ask my mother any question about our household ; and I want no counsel but yours. You seem to have a strange idea of girls. Have I been so difficult to control ? And Meta has more sense and would want less guidance than I."

"But you, not I, would have to guide her," he replied, with a smile. "And you are wrong altogether, Ivy. Meta would give thrice the trouble to any feminine guardian that you ever would have done ; and the responsibility, the

anxiety, sometimes the actual difficulty, will be no little burden to you."

"I cannot think it, Ethert. At any rate, I never asked you anything yet for myself. I do ask this; *do* let me keep Meta!"

"Are you at all sure, Ivy, that she will not be in every way rather a grief than a pleasure to you?—that her presence will not make you feel still less well pleased with me, will not raise questions or doubts between us; that you will not suspect me of being over-thoughtful, over-indulgent to her?"

"I don't understand. I cannot imagine what you think of me, Ethert! Do you fancy I grudge Meta any of the affection you have given her, or think you would like me any the better if you did not like her? And if you spoil her, that is your affair: it may make trouble for you, perhaps, though I can hardly think it."

"I shall not spoil her in that sense, Ivy. If you keep her, she is your charge, not mine; and I shall never interfere or intercede for her. But neither must you ask me to do what I have never pretended to do heretofore—to correct her

petulance, to control her temper. If you find her beyond your management, we come back to the same point at which we stood yesterday—you must send her to school; and remember she will feel it harder then.”

“Then you will let me keep her?” Ivy said, eagerly, too delighted in the evidence of yielding afforded by her husband’s conditional warning to note the position he assigned to Meta and to herself, a view of their relation utterly different from her own.

“I must, if you insist. But, Ivy, I think you will repent it before long. If you do, remember what has passed to-day, and promise me this—that without debate, without complaining of me, or of her to me, you will send her at once to school.”

“She must go if you desire it, of course, Ethert. But you will let me try, at any rate?”

“If you are of the same mind to-morrow, Ivy, having thought it over. But, once more, it is not my wish, and I fear it will not long be yours.”

CHAPTER II.

MERVARID.

“PEARL,” said Ethert, the next morning, as they rose from the breakfast-table, “will you leave us for the present? I must ask you to spare Ivy to me for a little while.”

Meta had not ventured to question Ivy, and Ivy, feeling that her husband's consent to her wishes had not been full and unconditional, that she had no right to commit him until after the period of reflection he himself had assigned, had not dared to offer any consolation or encouragement that might seem to suggest a promise which might involve a bitter disappointment. Her compassionate, caressing manner had only impressed Meta the more with the dread that she had failed, that Ethert's decision remained unaltered. Still she could not but

wish to hope. Her dismissal, more abrupt than quite accorded with Ethert's usual courtesy, would in itself perhaps have surprised her a little, so seldom had he appeared to desire a *tête-à-tête* with Ivy; and it now gave her some ground, however slight, to believe at least that her fate was still under consideration, that Ethert had listened to, had not finally refused, the petition she believed that Ivy had intended to prefer. Her dread of school, or rather of being sent to school by Ethert under present circumstances, was not, could not be, the dread felt by a timid or petted child at exchanging the indulgence of an affectionate home for the strange company and formal discipline of a young ladies' school. She felt tolerably sure that she would not meet with colder demeanour, with less demonstration of kindness, and certainly not with severer measure to her faults, or less indulgence for her fancies, than she had heretofore received. But, like most wayward, fanciful, solitary children, she feared and shrank from forced and constant association with companions not of her own selection; felt that not to be alone by night or day would in itself be a

terrible trial. Still, she had courage to bear the ordinary trials that school could present to the fancy of another girl of her age equally sensitive. If it had been, as for another, a question only whether three-quarters of the year, for three or four years, should be spent in uncongenial company or under unaccustomed restraints, assuredly for no such pain or fear would she have betrayed her feelings as she had done to one whom, despite her studious kindness and softness of manner, she had been disposed to regard with jealousy and distrust. To her school meant now all that to Ethert, on her behalf, an orphan asylum had meant some seven years before. It meant the loss of home and home-life altogether, utter loneliness, absolute separation from the only friend, loss of the only protection that was now left to her in the world; and the dreariness of the prospect would have utterly appalled her, apart from the anxiety few children of her age would have felt, and which, well as he knew her, it never occurred to Ethert that she would feel, as to her future. If he could no longer act as her immediate and per-

sonal guardian, if he could no longer give her a home, what was to become of her, even when her school-life was over?

The least self-reliant of her sex could not have had less confidence in her power to face the world alone, to make her own way therein, than Meta, intelligent and high-spirited as she was. She was far too thoroughly feminine to feel any of that independence which is perhaps the fundamental characteristic of the unfeminine character we call strong-minded. It was no wonder that, especially after the severe shock her nerves had so lately sustained, this prospect should utterly frighten, dishearten even one who had never been in any sense a spoiled or indulged child. Perhaps she dreaded to be thrown upon the world the more that she had met with so little of gentleness or tenderness, except from Ethert; and unconsciously measured the general character of her own sex by that of the one woman she had familiarly known. To lose Ethert, to be thrown entirely among, dependent to a great extent on the mercies of, women like his mother, not even bound to her as his mother had been—even her

brief experience of Ivy's kindly companionship in earlier days, Ivy's affectionate consideration of late, could not render the thought otherwise than intolerable. She had well-nigh broken down and given way to hopeless weeping again before, hearing her hostess's step approach the drawing-room door, she hastily dried her tears, and drew herself up into an attitude unconsciously expressive of hard, cold endurance. Ivy's sensitive sympathy felt rather than saw this, and there was even greater tenderness than usual in her manner, much more of protection, of proffered help and comfort in her demeanour than she had ever before ventured to show towards Meta, as, when the latter rose on her approach, she passed her arm caressingly around her, and kissed her brow while she drew her forward. Meta looked up shyly, timidly, but hopefully, into her face, and reading in the half smile on the lips, in the soft colour, slight as it ever was, on the cheeks, and the light in the large, dark, soft eyes, a kindly pleasure, whose meaning she could hardly doubt—a momentary gleam of unselfish happiness contrasting the usual quiet

gravity, if not sadness, of Ivy's countenance—she was encouraged to speak.

“Have you, will you persuade him, Lady Glynne; if only that I am not to lose everything altogether?”

“You could never do that, dear child. You could never lose Ethert's love for you, or, if you cared for that, my own. I don't know why you fear so; but I told Ethert I would leave it to him to tell you. It is his doing, and I will not—it is for him to tell you.”

What she was to hear, however, Meta again doubted exceedingly when, as Ivy led her into the room and drew her close to her guardian's chair, she noted the grave and a little troubled expression of his face, and, she thought, a certain shadow of sternness thereon that it had never before worn for her.

“Pearl, Lady Glynne is kind enough to wish, to tell me she wishes, that you should remain with her for the present. She thinks you will wish it, and she knows how naturally you fear the loneliness, the strangeness of school-life without a home. I hope you will feel how very much you owe to her kindness. She tries,

she wishes at any rate, to do what is perhaps the greatest service, the greatest kindness, that can be rendered to a young girl—perhaps, too, the greatest effort a lady can make for one—to give you a home.”

“It is very, very kind of her,” Meta said, earnestly, clasping warmly and closely the hand that still held hers. “I never thought, never hoped, that even she would be so good to me. But, Ethert,”—lapsing unconsciously, in the earnestness and warmth of her feeling, into the habitual familiarity she had studiously dropped of late,—“do you wish it? do you think it right? I should not like to encroach on her kindness or on yours.”

“Lady Glynne wishes it, Pearl, and I am as grateful for her kindness as—you should be, and I hope you are. You know how much pained I was to be forced to do what gave you pain, and seemed, perhaps, hardly kind on my part; but I should be the more grieved, the more ashamed, if she had ever reason to regret her kindness to both of us.”

“I will try, indeed I will, to give her no cause,” Meta replied, looking frankly and grate-

fully into Ivy's face, which seemed somewhat troubled, the young girl hardly understood why, by her husband's words.

"I know you will; I have no fear," Ivy answered, drawing her young companion still closer to her.

"You must remember, however, Pearl," Ethert went on, "what hitherto I have done my best to let—to make you forget, that I am your guardian, that you are my ward, or, as my mother used to call you, though never in your presence, my adopted child; and as I become bound in some sense for your good behaviour," he added, smiling, "it is conceivable now that I might have to give a command, or even a scolding, without giving you the right to resent it so fiercely as of old. And, of course, in taking upon her my mother's charge, I need not tell you that Lady Glynne succeeds to all my mother's authority; that she must exercise it exactly as she thinks fit, and that, if she finds its exercise unpleasant, she can only undo at once what she has done to-day. And understand, Pearl, it is her doing, not mine. I could not have ventured to ask what I am

almost ashamed to accept, even for you."

If the pointed reminder was not exactly agreeable to Meta's feeling, its reasonableness and justice were too plain to allow her to resent or even to feel hurt by the words which thus distinctly defined her future relation to a protectress so little older than herself. Ivy, however, was not merely embarrassed, but, for more reasons than she could have given, not a little pained. It was not only that the position in which Ethert placed her was so little congenial to her own intention or feeling; perhaps in the studied decision with which he asserted for her an authority she would never have dreamed of assuming, as in the reiterated expression of his gratitude to herself, there was a formality, a tone, if not of estrangement, yet of separation, that, if Meta could not perceive, she herself could not but feel. It was not, she thought, the tone in which one who loved and trusted her would have accepted what to her seemed only the natural and obvious part of a wife towards her husband's ward and dependent. She would have preferred that Ethert should have taken for granted her willingness, and

more than willingness, to spare him the pain of parting with his favourite, to assist him in the performance of his duty. If he could not do that, he might, she thought, have asked her; or, if he waited for her to make the offer, might have treated it as natural and simply becoming. The formal expression of what seemed to her exaggerated thanks reminded her but too painfully of that which, though enforced upon her more than once in words, and constantly in act or omission, she could never bear to remember—Ethert's declaration that he made and could make no claim upon her affection or her duty.

But she was certainly more surprised, and perhaps additionally pained, when she saw in his manner that he had no more to say to Meta, no intention to mark in any kindlier way the renewal of their relation, it might be said her first actual adoption as a member of his own household. She had intentionally, though quite naturally, drawn Meta up to his seat, so as to place her between them, and in close contact with both; and now, as she saw that Ethert considered the incident closed, her look of disappointment, almost of reproach, made her

meaning and her expectation perfectly clear to his apprehension. He was touched as well as surprised, not only by the simple warmth of her affection for Meta, free from every tinge of doubt or jealousy, but yet more by her frank recognition of his own still warmer interest as a thing of course, a feeling not merely natural and inevitable but almost obligatory. It was impossible not to comply with what was evidently her expectation and intention, though it had not occurred to him. Ivy's feminine instinct was so true, or her sympathy so perfect, that the kiss which she had tacitly claimed for another—though she had long ceased to hope, almost ceased to miss it herself—healed entirely whatever sting the distinctly implied warning, the measured precision of his words, might have left in Meta's mind; and rendered the young girl simply and entirely happy in the common, united kindness and affection of both her guardians, the cordiality of her adoption into their home.

"Ivy," Ethert said, when they were next alone, "I could not have allowed you to do this thing for my sake, as an act of kindness

to me, any more than I could have asked it. But you must not on that account fancy that I do not fully feel the true kindness you have done me as well as Meta, the bitter pain you have spared me. It will, as you said, be an unspeakable comfort to me to know that she is with you, that she has a home, and the best and happiest—unless by her own fault she makes it otherwise—that I could have desired for her. If I had not grown so fond of her in all these years, it would still have been very hard to feel myself forced to desert a duty I had undertaken, to disappoint expectations she had a right to form—could not have helped forming—to inflict what was cruel at best, and what she would have felt with even exaggerated sensitiveness. Whatever may happen hereafter, believe me, I never shall or can forget this; *nothing* can cancel the debt I owe you for her sake.”

One loving look or touch, one caressing word, would have been worth more than all the warmest thanks he could give her; and yet this time the profound, almost pathetic sincerity of those thanks, the presence of some-

thing kinder and warmer than the set phrases of courtesy that had so galled and stung her on former occasions, pleased and comforted Ivy; for a moment she felt that Ethert meant all he said, and much more than she could have expected. She had obtained, almost wrung from him his consent, only as a personal favour to herself, after he had peremptorily refused it alike on his own behalf and on Meta's; yet he seemed resolved to forget this, and not only before Meta, but between themselves, had generously given her full credit as for an act of pure disinterested kindness—a service rendered, almost a sacrifice made. Glad to have secured a companion, to have changed Meta's sorrow into joy—glad, above all, to have given Ethert pleasure—it was unhopèd-for delight to find his sense of relief so frankly and warmly acknowledged. Only, why could he not take her fealty, her anxiety to help and comfort him, as a thing of course? Why did he persistently remind her, even more in act than in word, and not least distinctly when, as now, he felt most kindly, that he expected nothing from her? Must she believe that this renunciation of her

love, of her duty, almost of herself, was no phrase, no metaphor, but a bitter, literal truth? And his reference to the future—"whatever may happen"—almost frightened her, as it suggested the probability of something worse than the present, of alienation more complete, estrangement more bitter. What, how that could be, she could not conceive; to her any hint that she might and doubtless would break—as far as was possible—the bond which had well-nigh fulfilled its purpose, seemed merely wanton, because utterly unmeaning unkindness.

"I wish," she answered, timidly—"I do wish, Ethert, that you would not speak in that way, as if you did not know, could not believe how truly I do long and try to please you; how hard I strive to keep the spirit of that promise you seemed to think so much of, but will never use—to comply with your wishes whenever I can guess what they are. But can you not feel, can you not see that it is not kind—that it is not doing as I suppose you wish to do, making me happier for having done what pleases you—when you thank me in this way? It only reminds me that you will not love me any the

better for it. If you cared for me, it would seem only natural; you would have expected, have taken for granted all I could do for you or yours. And if you cannot, will not do that, do not take so much pains to remind me of—what I wish I could forget.”

“I could not, Ivy, take a thing like this for granted in any case. There are not many wives who would have done it; and from you—I can only repeat, happen what may hereafter, I can never forget, never cease to be grateful for what you have done to-day.”

Once again, for the first time since she had shared his home, he took her hand in his, and kissed it with as much of warmth and kindness as of mere courtesy. It touched and gratified her more that he did not instantly release it; in the close, lingering pressure before he did so she felt a momentary return of the confidence and affection of earlier and happier days, when no unwelcome artificial bond had superseded the natural ties of kindred and habitual intimacy. He had dropped her hand and left the house before she could find words to answer, or even courage to return the clasp; and she feared that

she had seemed cold or resentful. She could not hope, till the morrow, to guess from his look or tone whether he had so construed the omission ; but her heart was lighter, her lonely rest haunted by less painful dreams and waking fancies, than for many a day and night.

CHAPTER III.

REAL AND IDEAL.

“**I**VY,” her husband suddenly asked, some weeks later, “have you taken note of the theatrical advertisements lately? You see what is to be the opera at Covent Garden next Saturday? It is so long since you have had any indulgence of that kind, and you said once you should so like—I suppose it was from mere curiosity—a box there. We can have one, and it is not a very unreasonable extravagance. Would you like it?”

There was little need for Ivy’s lips to repeat the answer which her eyes, her whole expression and attitude, had already given.

“Oh! Ethert—if only it is not so tiring to you—because it is the only evening you need not sit up so late. And—yes, I should, if you

don't mind, because Meta has never seen an opera; and she would enjoy it so much, with all her love of music, as she loves everything that is beautiful in nature and art. It would be such a treat to her that, if I did not care so much myself, it would be a delight to watch her pleasure for the first time."

"Meta!" he said. "I had no thought of taking her."

"Surely, Ethert, you would never dream of leaving her at home? And it would seem such needless unkindness, simply going out of our way to mortify her."

"I hardly think it is usual—I am sure it is not a thing that young girls of her age expect, or ought to expect as matter of course, even from their own parents."

"Ethert, why should you wish—but you don't; and you cannot think—surely you cannot—that I should grudge her such a pleasure, even if it could interfere with my own? No, I would rather give it up than not take Meta. It would look, it would be, like deliberate and very cruel punishment."

"If it did, she has deserved it, Ivy; and, if

you choose, you may put it to her in that light."

"What for, Ethert? What has she done? Do you mean—I saw you were vexed last night, but I thought, surely, you were vexed with my stupidity, not with her memory and quickness."

"It was natural you should not remember, Ivy; it was natural that a girl still in the school-room should; and her way of correcting your error was so unbecoming that, if I took no notice, it was only that I might not seem to interfere with your authority. And I certainly took it for granted she would hear of it afterwards."

"Ethert," said Ivy, after a brief pause, "do you expect me to forget how nearly Meta and I are of the same age, and how much her cleverness, her thoughtfulness, and my want of both make up the little difference there is? Can you think she would bear that I should assume, should treat her as your mother might have done—as you might do? What makes you so sharp, so hard on her? She might have been much more pert—it *would* have been pertness

then—to you, and I am sure you would only have smiled. Is it for my sake—to please me? It is not only that you are ready, as you never were, to find fault—not *to* her, but you speak as if I should—but you never talk to her, you scarcely ask about her studies. When she asked you about the drawing, reminded you why you had never given her lessons, and would have liked to ask you now, you put it down at once. You have given her one game of chess since she came—you used to play every evening, and enjoy it as much as she—and that was when I asked you. I might say you do not look at her, if I had not seen your look the first evening. And you used to make so much of her, you know how much you are to her, yet you have changed to her almost as much as to me. But that change, I know, is only in manner; you are as fond of her as ever, really. Do you think it does not grieve her almost as much as yourself? What has *she* done?—she has not—— What!” as she saw him bite his lip to conceal a smile, not sarcastic, but, in the true sense of a mis-used word, sardonic, painful, “is it on my account? Is it because you

cannot pretend to care for me that you pretend not to care for her? Do you think it would hurt me more to see you treat her simply and naturally, or are you afraid that I should make her suffer for it? What can you think of me, Ethert? What has made you think so ill of me, expect things I could not dream of?"

"I think," he returned, as lightly as he could, "that you are a woman, Ivy; and, if I do you wrong, it is only because you are so much more womanly than most."

"For shame, Ethert!" she answered, replying almost passionately to his forced levity. "Can you think I wish, because your marriage is a misery, that you should have no comfort? Because I make your life so dreary—so sad that if I had dreamed of it no terror, no shame should have induced me to do it—should I grudge you that one bit of sunshine? Because you have no happiness in your wife's affection, can I wish to spoil your pleasure in the affection of a child? And if I did, if I could be so unworthy and ungenerous, do you think that I am deceived?"

"Deceived!" he repeated, sharply, almost

angrily; then, carefully controlling his tone, "I never lied to you, Ivy, by word or deed. At any rate, you don't fancy Pearl has anything to conceal, or would dream of concealing it? Find out from her whether I do not treat her, when we are alone together,—you know how seldom that is,—exactly as in your presence."

"Ethert!" That one word was all the rebuke she deigned. "I wish you did not; but I begin to understand you, only I am so sorry to see it. You will give me no love, you will not allow—and no doubt you are right there; married against your will, I *have* no claim to it. But you think I have a right to forbid your loving anybody else, to deny you any natural kindly feeling for any one, from any one, that I should not grudge for a moment if we were happy, if you cared for me. And you really think it can be any compensation, any satisfaction to see you torture yourself, and grieve Pearl, and make her fancy, as I know she does, that I—I don't quite know what she thinks, whether I complain of her, or am so exacting of your attention; but she thinks it is my doing, and I could not, if I dared, tell her that it is not.

She would only be the more hurt that you are so changed to her of your own accord. Well, I know it is no use; but, Ethert, you will take her? And do be kind to her, do behave to her as you used. Remember, I have seen you together in the old days, when you were kind to me just as you were to her, and I know you feel just the same now for her. You will take her?"

"You shall take her, Ivy, and she shall understand that it is your doing, that her pleasure—and I know how pleased she will be—is your gift. And you are quite right. You know that I shall enjoy her pleasure almost as much as you will, and I have to thank you for that delight."

Ivy had her way in some measure after this scene, but in a manner she certainly had not foreseen, and one that more than rewarded an effort of which, if effort there had been, she was wholly unconscious. Too loyal to take advantage of a declaration which seemed, so far as words could go, to renounce the conjugal privilege of jealousy—alive on the one hand to the twofold danger of appearing to evince his natural interest in his ward more frankly in

Ivy's absence; on the other hand, too considerate or too rational to take the latter quite at her word, and expose her patience and faith to the severe trial of such a contrast as a really natural manner towards Meta would present to his treatment of herself—Ethert did thenceforth resume much of his former interest in Meta's pursuits, re-invite in some measure her frank, fluent confidence of old; but always in Ivy's presence, and so as to draw her into every interchange of thought and feeling. She found herself participating in all their conversation, found herself united—identified to Meta's eyes and Meta's consciousness—with Ethert in every favour bestowed, in every proof afforded of interest in Meta's ideas, tasks, studies, and pleasures; and this joint care, this common occupation with another, if it still left the same estrangement, if it could not remove the narrow, invisible, absolute barrier between them, yet did much to brighten a great part of their household life, at times almost enabled Ivy to forget the chilling cloud that overhung it.

They were little alone together now, to Ethert's infinite relief, and to Ivy's comfort, if

not exactly to her satisfaction. To lovers, even to a married pair long accustomed to the calmer atmosphere of conjugal life, such constant presence of a third person could not have been other than a burden, a constraint. But where profound estrangement exists—making itself most keenly felt precisely in those hours when confidence and affection would naturally be most outspoken, most freely manifested, and are therefore most missed—the presence of another serves to conceal from each the pain and embarrassment of the other, if not his or her own; and the want is less perceptible because the occasions when it is most forcibly revealed are thus avoided. Nothing is so terribly irksome as the sole companionship of an unloving or estranged couple. For this very reason it is that such sole companionship is so desired by both, even though the desire be not avowed to themselves, when, despite a temporary quarrel however bitter, a temporary estrangement however marked, love, or a yearning sense of lost love, still survives in both hearts. Then, if thrown much and alone together, the subject of dispute or coldness is so near to the

hearts and lips of both that, if only through taunt and reproach, explanation is sure to come—break out, it may be, in sheer rebellion against the intolerable embarrassment of its avoidance, leading most often to reconciliation, sometimes, perhaps, to that final separation which is at any rate, more endurable than the silent separation of heart which has preceded it.

But when explanation is out of the question, when on one side at least there is no love to be won back, when the other is forced to feel that appeal is useless, and that discussion can only widen the breach, only deepen an aversion too cold and resolute to be swept away by the most passionate of one-sided impulses—and this was Ivy's present case, whatever her hope that her patient loyalty must at last prevail,—*then* the presence of another, especially of one in whom both are interested, who affords to both a ground upon which they can meet without a disposition to quarrel or reproach, is felt as a security; and tends to mutual ease, and perhaps to gradual *rapprochement*. Such a common ground, such a neutral interest, can seldom indeed be supplied to husband and wife save

by their own children ; the last person to afford it to a young pair would be a girl in whom the wife might well apprehend a rival, if not in her husband's love, equally denied to both, yet in his interest and attention. But Ivy was as perfectly free from the feminine vice of jealousy as it is in the nature of a woman who loves to be ; too pure, too inexperienced perhaps to entertain the shadow of doubt respecting the loyalty either of her husband or of her ward.

Perhaps the faith that could in no case have failed was unconsciously confirmed by the guarantee that the character of one, the age of the other, the position of both afforded. Ethert's withered romance had never had much connection with his real and present affection for a pretty, intelligent, wayward, affectionate child whose attachment to him was wholly childlike ; and by no possibility could he have cherished a thought, a wish that, if disloyal to his wife, must have been dishonourable to himself and dishonouring to his orphan charge. This restraint apart, to have fallen in love they must have ceased to love each other as of old, or at least must have been parted at the critical

period when the child was growing into the feelings, instincts, consciousness of womanhood. Brought together again so soon, their relation reverted to its old character, with somewhat more of authority on the guardian's side, of grateful deference on the girl's.

With this relation Ivy, loving and trusting both, found herself happily associated, the partner of Ethert's kindness to Meta, the sharer of Meta's thankful and innocent devotion. Accustomed to Ethert's literary confidences, Pearl resumed her eager enquiries and fearless criticism. Ethert was ever careful to include Ivy in the conversation thus introduced, and in this way, for the first time, the young wife became familiar with and interested in her husband's work and thoughts, learned to appreciate and enjoy what both Ethert and herself had deemed beyond the scope of her intelligence or her sympathy.

Thus in a few months there grew up between them a mutual comprehension, an intellectual intimacy which, without some such medium of encouragement to Ivy's timidity and mental indolence, some such intrusion on Ethert's

reserve, years of loving conjugal life might have failed to produce. Insensibly drawn on to subjects she had fancied too high for her, Ivy rapidly gained a real insight into her husband's mind ; led into explanation and discussion, Ethert learned to believe in her capacity to understand and sympathise with him even in these fanciful and somewhat mystic speculations, these poetic dreams from which, yet more than from the highest kind of practical or scientific thought, he would have supposed her by nature excluded. Still by far the greater part of Ivy's and of Meta's leisure was spent by themselves, for of Ethert's hours but a few were or could be bestowed on them ; still on principle and of set purpose he paid to Ivy every attention, every courtesy in his power with a punctiliousness, a devotion far more absolute than love would either have exacted or inspired ; and still, whenever a question involving either arose, she was pointedly reminded that Meta was considered as her charge, as amenable to her counsel and control, and not to Ethert's. But as there was no room in her breast for jealousy or suspicion, this surrender of authority

gave her no satisfaction, while it often troubled her; especially as Meta, wayward and wilful by nature, was by no means in thorough accord with the governess whom Ethert had selected for her, and under whose instruction and direction she spent some hours of five mornings in the week.

“Meta,” Ivy said, one Saturday, as they sat together awaiting Ethert at the late breakfast-table, “pray, pray do not be stubborn now. I dare say you may have been right in the main. I can quite believe that Miss Compton is hard and provoking, and misunderstands you more easily than need be, more than most women would. But do not be angry with me for telling you that you have put yourself in the wrong; and, whether you will believe me in that or not, do apologise, since she insists upon it.”

The compression of Meta’s naturally soft and rather pouting lips, the light visible for a moment in the eyes before the half-lowered lids gave the face a somewhat obstinate expression, and the indignant colour in her cheeks, promised no compliance with this entreaty; which,

nevertheless, she could not hear unmoved from one who had been so uniformly kind, affectionate, indulgent to her every whim and humour.

“Do give way, Pearl,” Ivy repeated—using her husband’s pet name for his favourite, but shyly, and in a half-apologetic tone, as she had done before when she sought to be especially caressing and tender—“for my sake, if not for your own or Miss Compton’s, and for Ethert’s, if not for mine. Do you not see it must come to him, if you persist? I cannot let Miss Compton go, as she threatens, without a word to him. Do not force me to tell, to speak to him as if I could not—as if you were—unmanageable.”

The epithet might be unfortunately chosen, though Ivy had selected her every word with most anxious care to avoid that assumption of authority which, however inseparable from responsibility, she thought likely to wound Meta’s pride and embitter her temper; which, considering their respective ages, she fancied her charge certain to resent. But it was not only, or chiefly, the form of expression which provoked the feeling that at this moment gave to

Meta's face its least pleasing expression—a resolute resistance to reason or force, which, however natural under the strong control to which she had been accustomed, seemed simply wanton unkindness and ingratitude towards one so gentle, so yielding, and so anxious to soothe and spare as was Ivy.

“If you do that, Lady Glynne,” she said, “you know what will be the consequence.”

Ivy failed to understand the meaning either of the words or of the evident apprehension that mingled with, perhaps deepened, the stubborn expression of her companion's countenance.

“You are not afraid of Ethert, Meta? You cannot think that he will be hard upon you, that he will not make every possible excuse for you. I should be very sorry indeed to seem to complain of you. But what can I do? Miss Compton insists that you shall ask her pardon, that we shall mark our displeasure if you will not, or that she will throw up her charge. If you will not yield, what can I do? Ethert must hear of it.”

“You must do as you please. But, if you

appeal to him, you know, as I know, the consequences."

The repetition of this phrase a little startled Ivy, seeming very much more applicable to Meta's former experiences than to her relation with either of her present guardians.

"Then," she answered, "if you fear so much what Ethert will say, spare me what I shall feel quite as painfully as yourself."

"No, Lady Glynne," Meta said, replying resolutely to an argument which an older and more experienced, if not more sympathetic, guardian would have known to be sure to fail with such a character; "I will not do for fear what I would not do because you wished it or because I thought it right. You must do as you please. Forgive me if I cannot but feel that the punishment you will bring upon me comes from your own hand."

By the time that Ethert's "good morning" terminated the controversy, Ivy had become reluctantly and painfully convinced of the immobility of Meta's determination. Her heart beat fast, and she found it hard to control her tones and looks so completely as not to render

her husband aware that something had seriously troubled her, before she had time to make up her own mind. It was not long, however, before impatience of suspense, perhaps, rather than deliberate judgment, drove her to enter as quickly as possible on the scene that she dreaded, but felt to be inevitable. Meta purposely left them together, resolved to display no shrinking from that appeal she had already deprecated as earnestly as her pride would permit; and, as soon as they were alone, Ivy stated the case as briefly as she could, as truthfully as her extreme anxiety to spare at once Meta's feelings and her husband's tenderness for his ward would permit.

"Don't misunderstand me this time, Ethert," she concluded. "It is always hard enough, but it would make me miserable if you were to misunderstand me about Meta. I know how it would pain you, and I am sure you would never forgive me if I seemed to make trouble between you."

"I told you, Ivy, from the first how grateful I was for your kindness, how doubtful I felt whether its endurance would be possible; but I

hoped you were more comfortable, less troubled than I had ventured to expect. But why appeal to me? If you do so, if you bring her to me as a rebel you cannot control, I have only one course."

"Why, Ethert? And what do you mean?" enquired Ivy, more frightened than ever by a phrase so like Meta's that it recalled and seemed to justify the young girl's evident alarm.

"What can *I* do with a girl of her age? She might possibly obey me; but, after refusing you, I could not accept that. If you tell me you cannot manage her, she must go to school; and, if she is to be sent away in disgrace, I had rather it were your doing."

"Ethert, that is unkind; and is it quite fair? It means, you know it means that, happen what may, I must never come to you for help or support; and that seems hard, after you warned me yourself that she might need counsel and—control."

"But why appeal to me if she does? She knows that she is entirely in your hands."

"But she is not," Ivy urged. "I wanted her to ask pardon; for, if Miss Compton was un-

reasonable and exacting, Meta lost her temper and was rude. But indeed, Ethert, I cannot persuade her."

"Probably not," he answered, drily. "I don't suppose I could, and my mother would never have tried."

"Is it the same thing—with me? I was so sorry you spoke to her in that way at first. I wanted a friend and companion, and you have given me a jealous, resentful child. Naturally, if she thinks I am giving myself matronly airs towards a schoolgirl, it shuts her heart and ears at once. I have never treated her so, but she seems always to expect it. Before that, she would always listen to me, though she must know how much cleverer, more intelligent, she is. She would yield to please me; but now, when her face sets as it used against your mother, and when she says 'Lady Glynne,'—unconsciously mimicking Meta's tone and manner,—“I feel in despair. Then I know I might as well talk to Miss Compton—or to you. You know I would not seem to complain of her, I would not come to you about such schoolgirl

squabbles ; but—Miss Compton insists, and Meta won't—and—what am I to do ?”

Ethert was not a little vexed by this appeal ; the more vexed that he could scarcely help smiling. He was a man to feel keenly all that is vexatious in such domestic demands on masculine authority ; thoroughly sensible of the awkwardness, acutely alive to the ridicule of any serious conflict with a young girl's wayward humours, yet aware that to women such collisions are by no means a laughing matter. But what annoyed him most was to have the object of his lately-abandoned romance thus brought before him as a child to be corrected, a rebel against school-room discipline ; a piece of practical irony all the more telling because, as he well knew, wholly unconscious and unintentional, which, rendering his fancy supremely ridiculous in his own eyes, chafed him as ridicule ever chafes romance.

“ Whatever you choose,” he answered, coolly. “ You don't need my help to deal with her as summarily as you please ; and, if you are at a loss for a sufficient penalty, I don't doubt Miss Compton can find one.”

“What do you mean? Ethert, can you think I meant to get her into trouble with you? Do you fancy I wish to hurt her? Or, as you say I must deal with her, did you think I wished you to tell me beforehand to punish her? As if I could bear it, or she would ever endure the very word from me! And I must seem so false—when I have talked kindly and tried simply to persuade her, and then put things to you so that you talk of Oh, Ethert, you are so hard on me!”

“Nonsense! I beg your pardon, Ivy; but this is absurd exaggeration. Sensitive as Pearl is, she has been used to a strong hand, and she knows well enough that she must be amenable to your government; or, if not, that you, not I, must correct her. Of course, if she actually rebels, you must send her to school—or I shall, to-morrow.”

“No, no, Ethert! that would be too cruel! She could hardly deserve it if she had been ever so troublesome, if you had tried everything else in vain for months; and even then I would never bring her to it. And you who are so fond of her, how can you—for almost her first

fault? You know there is no punishment she would not bear ten times over rather than that."

"Then give her one, Ivy, and have done with it. Once more, Pearl is in your hands—not Miss Compton's, please!—and they are too light to hurt and too soft to sting."

Why Ivy should, at the moment, have given a literal construction to the complimentary metaphor, she could not have told; perhaps because Ethert's look had been turned on the limbs whose physical beauty had suggested it. The rising colour in her cheek, the indignant light in her eyes as she lifted them for an instant to his own, betrayed the misconception; and manifested a pain and displeasure that would have found utterance in words, but for the restraint imposed less by her native timidity than by that dread of offending Ethert which had now become an ever-present instinct. Half amused by, half admiring the spirit he had as little intended to provoke as to quell, and remembering the debt he owed on Meta's account to her who had given the young girl the supreme boon of a home, he concluded, in an altered tone:

“Ivy, let us have no misconception about Pearl. It was because you are so young, and she somewhat wilful, that I intentionally insisted on your authority; and if you think her likely to resent its exercise, the more reason that she should learn to submit absolutely to you without reference to myself. If either of you are to doubt on that point—if you cannot trust me to leave her entirely in your hands, or if she fancies you are afraid to act without securing my support beforehand—she must leave us at once, and that would pain me deeply. Now, settle with her yourself, the sooner and more decisively the better. Nothing you will do is worth such a discussion between us; and this must be the last.”

“But, Ethert, tell me what I am to do—what——”

“No, indeed, Ivy! Pearl shall make her submission to yourself; you are not to take the sting out of her penance by giving it in my name. If her spirit really resent a rule like yours, it is not the spirit for which I gave her credit; and pride so out of place deserves more humiliation than you will ever be provoked to

inflict. And, Ivy, if you care to give her a less exacting teacher, Pearl shall owe the change to your intercession."

Ivy felt that there was nothing more to be said. The decisive expression of her husband's confidence in her kindness to Meta had surprised hardly less than gratified her. With all her tenderness for her young companion, fear of Ethert's displeasure had contributed to her extreme aversion from the appeal to him. She had understood from the first that he would make no excuse or intercession for Pearl; that, had she wished to deal severely with the offender, she would have his full sanction, and would never hear a word imputing blame or harshness to herself. But she had felt almost equally sure that at heart he would condemn her, that he would never forgive any real trouble in which she might involve his orphan favourite. She saw that his trust was no less genuine than just; he had been perfectly kind to her, and yet there had been at first a bitterness, an irritation in his tone, whose meaning escaped her, ignorant as she necessarily was of the irony of the situation.

When she rejoined Meta, it was with a manifest embarrassment, a hesitation to speak or act, that gave the latter an opportunity for which she had apparently waited, and which she seized at once.

“May I speak first, Lady Glynne? I should like to speak as I ought, and I don’t know that I could—afterwards. It was very kind of you to keep me at all, and I am sorry this has come. I would say I deserved it if I thought so, but indeed I cannot. I cannot help feeling that this is too great a punishment; it would have been far easier to go at once than to be sent away now in disgrace.”

“Meta, if that ever happens, it will be not because you deserve it only, but because you have left Ethert no choice. It *shall not* be as long as I can plead for you. But to-day, dearest, do yield before I have to say any more. You know, you must know, I could not put things before Ethert so that he should approve or excuse you.”

“Of course not; and if he do not send me away, Lady Glynne, I know that is your doing. A word from you would have done it; I dare-

say only your word could have prevented it. Thank you, if you have spared me that. I can bear anything else he thinks I deserve : it comes from him."

"No, Meta ; I wish it did. It would be easier for both of us, darling. It is not my doing—I cannot help it ; but you remember how especially, how distinctly Ethert made you my charge ? You have made me feel more than once how you resented it. Do you think I wished it ? I have been so careful ever since not to say a word you could take as if I pretended to control you, to find fault, even once or twice when I was afraid that Ethert would observe it and be displeased. And, Meta, you must not think he does not see because he is silent. But to-day he will do nothing ; he expects me—darling, for my sake give way ; don't drive me to what would be so painful to us both. I would spare your pride if I could, dear ; I would gladly apologise to Miss Compton for you, but you know I cannot. Meta, do yield this time."

Meta, long used to a rule that had never softened harsh measures by any avowal of

sympathy, was not only much impressed by her companion's tenderness, but alarmed by her earnest pleading for permission to pardon. Her colour rose, her lip trembled, in spite of her efforts at self-control, as she replied,

"Let me understand, Lady Glynne. Sir Ethert gave me full warning that I was in your hands, and he means me to feel it now. It is *you* I have disobeyed, and you do not need his leave to correct me. Well, he is quite right. It is kind of you to be so anxious to spare me, very kind; but you will do as you please—you know I must submit."

"No, darling; I could not bear it! You will spare us both what I know you would never forgive? I have tried so hard to be only your friend, your sister, to make you happy and at home with me. You will do this one thing for me?"

"And if not, Lady Glynne, what will you do?"

Ivy, holding her ward in an embrace as close as the latter would permit, and clasping one hand in her own, had instinctively felt how far her pleading penetrated; and, confidently ex-

pecting it to prevail, was now bitterly disappointed.

“You ought not to ask,” she said, in a sad and somewhat colder tone, into which, for the first time, unconsciously to herself, something of authority entered. “What does that matter? You know I should be careful to spare your feelings as completely as possible; but, whatever I may do, you know that you will resent it at my hands more than anything my aunt or Ethert could have done. You will never forgive me the most trivial annoyance, the lightest restraint which we should have to call—punishment.”

To Ivy's infinite surprise, Meta sprang from her relaxing embrace, threw herself on her knees beside her friend, and, clasping both her hands, covered them with passionate kisses.

“You are quite wrong, Ivy,” she cried, half sobbing. “You shall punish me as you please, and I will only say that any one else would have been glad of the opportunity. You have been so kind, so careful to spare me, even when I have repaid you with distance and sullenness. It is not to escape having to submit to you, but

because you tell me, I will ask Miss Compton's pardon ; not for her—I hate her,—but for you. You are too good, too generous, Ivy—let me call you Ivy this time, at least, because it was in temper, and what Ethert calls ‘the pride that apes humility’ that I would say ‘Lady Glynne.’ It serves me right if now you are no longer the affectionate, kind, consoling companion that Ivy always was to me.”

“Always, my darling Pearl—if Ethert's wife may use Ethert's name for you.”

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL.

“**W**HAT do you think of this, Lestrangle?” I enquired, when the dissolution of Parliament was announced by a manifesto that threw down the gauntlet to a faction whose meditated treason, “biding its time to shoot the Empire from behind an Irish hedge,” to use our chief’s own phrase, was the open secret of party politics. “It seems we are to fight the campaign out on your own lines.”

“No,” replied the Editor. “This time he has forgotten to educate his party; he has taken even his supporters by surprise, and the country will neither understand nor believe him. No! an agitator (at least, at Birmingham or Edinburgh) may say anything he likes, a newspaper anything it knows, a statesman—what he can

prove. A charge of high treason should be tried at the Old Bailey, not on the hustings. The traitors will 'put themselves on their country,' and, though at this moment the desks of a dozen Rapparees contain papers that would hang half the leaders of the Left Centre, the Crown can't seize them, the indictment can't be published, the witnesses can't be produced, and the country must acquit. Worse still, this will hammer the enemy's forces into solid order. It will frighten the traitors enough to bring them to terms, and afford them an excuse for joining their friends; Radicals and Rapparees, Russians and Rats will make common cause with the chief who avowed that the end and aim of his political being was hatred of Endymion, the charge not proven will be considered not founded, and we shall be beaten all along the line. Our leader is the best Parliamentary tactician living, and since 1874 he has shown himself a great ruler; but, like some other chiefs accustomed only to command small armies, he can't move a hundred thousand men; he fails on the great scale and in the open field."

"It was 1868 that paved the way for 1874," observed Leaf.

"I don't feel sure of that," rejoined Lestrangle. "Tory democracy is, I fear, a mere illusion. The mob were tired of Aristides in '74; this time they will avenge bad harvests and bad trade on us, as if the Government controlled the weather, or as if this unparalleled period of commercial depression were not the re-action of the insane speculations which the late ministry fostered and gloried in."

"Then you think," I asked, "that the mob is Liberal?"

"No, it is simply changeable and incalculable. I am not sure, but I think no ministry will in future hold office for two successive Parliaments. True, we stand at one permanent disadvantage. Our strength lies chiefly in the counties, and the counties vote last. With us now, as in Rome of old, the omen of the prerogative tribe is seldom falsified."

"And yet," said Glynne, "I fancy that the working men are nearly, if not quite, as staunch partisans as the shopkeepers."

"Perhaps," replied Lestrangle. "But, you

see, a very small percentage turns the scale; and there is always a margin of utterly uncertain, motiveless votes sufficient to do that. Any one of the dozen lies so diligently circulated for the last twelve months might suffice."

"Such lies," said Leaf, "I never heard of. Philhellen has deliberately falsified the story of the Eastern War. He must know that the Servian rebellion was simply the work of the Russian Court, paid for with Russian gold, carried on by Russian volunteers—pirates and assassins by public law and international morality; that the Bulgarian massacres were the acts of a nation standing with its back to the wall—as we did in the Indian Mutiny. He knows too that, till Russia stirred them up to treason, the Bulgarians throve and prospered under Turkish rule; that they repaid the lenity of that rule by systematic, unprovoked, wanton robbery and massacre; that they have outdone all the crimes ever imputed to their late masters. But every one of these facts, notorious to him, he has deliberately suppressed."

"And," I added, "another of their leaders has publicly alleged that Sir Bartle Frere acted

under secret instructions exactly opposite to his public orders. If the speaker does not know that he is lying, every one of his colleagues and friends must; but not one of them has contradicted him. The fellow should be forced to repeat the charge in Parliament, or apologise on his knees."

"Do you remember," retorted Lestrangle, "that one of their men—one who will be a Commissioner of something should they come in—invented a deliberate fiction respecting the late appointment to the Sealing-wax Office? that the falsehood was disproved circumstantially from end to end, and yet the offender refused to retract or apologize, and neither chief nor colleague expressed disapproval or disgust?"

"It seems to me," I said, "judging not merely by Liberal language and Liberal allegations, but by Liberal sympathies, as manifested in public and private, abroad and at home, that there is something vulgarizing in Liberal associations and ideas. Read the *Fortnightly*, for example. One would think a Liberal gradually forgot how to be a gentleman."

"If I were to apply that doctrine personally,"

replied Lestrangle, "I know who would make it a point of honour to quarrel with me."

"No doubt. At one time certain sects and classes, with whom manly honour and female chastity were family traditions, were Liberals by the necessity of their position; and it takes time to work personal honesty out of the breed. But I have heard one of the men you mean apologize for General Butler, and another justify Sumner and O'Connell for refusing 'satisfaction,' and yet using language of personal insult to gentlemen. And not one of their party, from the lowest of its tagrag and bobtail upwards, has ever lost credit with his chief or colleagues for the most outrageous insolence or the most clearly proven slanders."

"How can they," said Lestrangle, "when the worst offender of all is the second man, not in official rank, but in personal weight and oratorical power, among them?"

Our business was settled, and the assembly broke up. I was left alone for a few minutes with our chief.

"I suppose," I said, "Glynne will stand this time for Stapleton?"

“You may ask him,” returned Lestrangle, “if you like. *I* can’t—or won’t.”

“And yet,” I observed, “we can’t afford to risk a seat; and I have heard him wish often and passionately that he could have answered this, or rebuked that, which he has heard in the Gallery. If you don’t like to press him, can’t you try through his wife? Women are always ambitious.”

Lestrangle turned and looked hard at me—a look which, as I well understood, conveyed profounder contempt and astonishment than he would have cared to utter in words.

“Well,” he said at last, “I did not think it could be necessary to warn you. Don’t mention Stapleton or the election to her, or in her presence.”

There was, however, one to whom no such warning could be conveyed, and who knew no better than I. The renewal of Meta’s frank, outspoken confidence had more than once entailed a kind of awkwardness for which neither Ivy nor Ethert had been fully prepared. She had tact enough to know that there were things to be simply taken for granted, however

greatly they surprised her, or, rather, because they were so utterly inexplicable. Ethert's life of ill-requited exhausting drudgery, his residence in London, must have motives which it was not for her to question. But, precisely because she had no conception of the truth, because the most painful aspects of the domestic life with which she was so intimate were so utterly concealed from her, she was liable now and then to make blunders that taxed Ethert's self-possession and coolness to the uttermost, that made Ivy flush and quiver with dismay. The conditions of Ethert's professional life, the vigilant guard observed in every trifle that might have betrayed their secrets, above all that formal courtesy of manner to which his awe of his mother and his intentional demeanour to herself had accustomed her, prevented her seeing anything strained or constrained in his intercourse with Ivy; the more completely that the secluded life she had led allowed her no chance of comparing their ways with those of any other married couple. It happened, however, that she had taken for granted what seemed to her the obvious reason of those

points in Ethert's conduct which had most perplexed his friends. To her childish simplicity it seemed not quite unnatural, though very generous, that Glynnehurst should be left to its former mistress; quite natural that Ethert's delicacy towards his bride, if not his own personal sorrow, should have prevented his consenting to stand for Stapleton immediately after the deaths of his uncle and cousin. It did not at first occur to her to make any enquiry on the subject in the midst of the intense excitement of the general election, though she had often asked whether his experience in the Gallery did not render him eager to take a personal part in the contest that went on below. But one morning, when by chance Ivy had left to her the distribution of the letters, her notice was attracted by the postmark of Stapleton and the signature of the sitting member on an envelope addressed to her guardian; and, as soon as he had laid down his letters, she asked, abruptly,

"Ethert, do you not mean to stand for Stapleton this time?"

"Certainly not, Pearl."

“And why not?” she said. “What a pity!”

It chanced that as she spoke she caught his eye fixed on Ivy, and, turning her own instinctively in the same direction, saw in the trembling lip, the struggling flush that coloured the pale cheek, such distress, perplexity, dismay as rendered her aware, not quite for the first time, that she had trespassed on some painful topic. It was not, however, her question so much as the dread of Ethert’s reply—though never yet had he in Meta’s presence been surprised or irritated into one of the speeches she feared—that so troubled the young wife. But, forcing a smile, Ethert threw across the table the letter that had prompted Meta’s enquiry.

“Read that, Ivy, and I think even your ambition for me would hardly make you wish that I should act ungenerously by one who so generously offers to make way for me in what he is pleased to call—our own borough.”

Ivy hardly knew what she read. All she cared was to know whether on this occasion Ethert had spoken sincerely, or only to spare her feelings before Meta. Her widening experience, the gradual acquaintance she had ac-

quired with the usages of public life and the general facts of politics, made her aware that Ethert's refusal in the first instance had been even more significant than she had then felt it. He might, she now knew, have accepted such a favour from any friend or political partisan: why not, then, from her, if he chose to consider even the political influence of Glynnehurst as hers exclusively?

"Ethert," she said, as soon as Miss Compton's summons to her pupil had left them alone, "was your answer to Meta quite sincere?"

"Could it be otherwise, Ivy?" He endeavoured to answer in a frank and open tone, but something suggested to her quick apprehension of his every feeling that the reply was evasive. "Do you not feel yourself that I could not accept T——'s offer to retire in my favour, after once allowing him to win the seat?"

"I don't understand these things. I have no doubt you are right, and, of course, you mean what you say, so far. But, Ethert, if the seat had been vacant, would you have accepted it? and, if not, why not? You would have no objection to come forward in the interest of a

friend, or even of a stranger, who wanted to see you in Parliament, and could command a seat; why not in mine, if you *will* call it mine?"

It was not easy to answer truthfully, impossible to answer at once truly and kindly; but Ethert had grown more and more reluctant to repeat needlessly the resolves with which Ivy had been so painfully familiarized, yet whose repetition always appeared to inflict a fresh wound. And once more he strove to evade the point he perfectly understood.

"A stranger, Ivy, could choose; the offer would obviously, notoriously be voluntary. Whatever I accept from my wife, I should seem to take."

"Ethert, you know, and everybody would feel that your wife cannot, does not wish to have a right, an interest apart from your own; wishes that all that is hers—if it were hers—should be yours. Would you like them not to think so? Then why cannot you deal with what you call mine at my request—at least as you would if it were offered by a stranger—unless—do you not see I must feel that it is because I am worse than a stranger to you?"

The deep and cruel pain apparent in the last low-voiced question was more than Ethert could endure to see her suffer; yet how to soothe it he hardly knew, only half aware that the motive she imputed was not the true one.

“It is not that, Ivy.”

“What is it then? Would not any wife wish her husband to profit by the influence of her family: would it not be taken for granted that I must wish it as much as you could? And what must people think now? Every one who knows you, knows how you care; wonders that you are not in Parliament. And, when you refuse the seat my father held so long, does not everybody know you are refusing it; and will they not understand why? Perhaps not from that alone—that must make them wonder and talk—but because it is the same in everything. Must they not guess that you——?”

She could scarcely check the tears that silenced her.

He mused for a few moments, seeking perhaps in his own mind what was the true answer to the question she would not permit him to evade.

“Perhaps, Ivy,” he said, turning at the same time to leave the room, “for the reason I have assigned so often—where I have given nothing, I can take nothing. Perhaps—I have not so treated you that I could bear to receive a favour at your hands.”

CHAPTER V.

INTERFERENCE.

RETURNING home one night at an hour somewhat earlier than usual, though so late that he had counted as confidently as ever on entering without disturbing the slumbers of the household, Ethert, as he sat down to the meal left in his study, was startled by a tap at the door. Ivy made her appearance in her dressing-gown, her unbound hair streaming far below her waist, displaying to his eyes, as it happened for the first time, the beauty of an ornament which Ethert greatly prized—without which, he was wont to say, no woman was really beautiful; of which few women knew how to make the most, which indeed a fashion, set by women conscious of their own disadvantage, has of late rendered worse than useless—

all but a disfigurement. It had never before struck him that his young wife, if not as beautiful as Meta might one day be, was yet one of the loveliest girls of her age he had ever seen. Her appearance there and then not a little surprised and perhaps somewhat alarmed him. He fully understood how carefully she would under ordinary circumstances have avoided what her timidity would have regarded almost as an intrusion; certainly as an advance, not to be expected from her, across the insensibly deepening if not widening gulf that parted them. Her face betrayed more embarrassment than distress or disturbance, but it was clear that she was troubled; and Ethert's anxiety naturally turned to the one person in whom he was deeply interested, besides her whose presence avouched her safety.

"What is it, Ivy? Is anything the matter with Meta?"

"No, Ethert, and I am sorry if I startled you. But I could not wait till morning to tell you, if . . . and you might chance to hear it from some one else. Mamma is here. You know I could not help asking her to stay when

I knew she had come on purpose to see you. And I am afraid something has gone wrong . . . I don't know what."

He had sprung up at her entrance. Now, as, in her anxiety and uneasiness, she came close to one from whom she could at least expect protection and help in trouble, he moved his own chair towards her, and, taking another himself, spoke gently, but with evident constraint.

"Sit down, Ivy; but there is not much to say. If you don't know why my aunt has come, I can guess, and—of course you would ask her! If you did not know how entirely you are mistress here, and that any guest of yours must be welcome, surely in this case there could be no reason to spoil your rest in order to tell me what you had done? Can you honestly tell me, Ivy, that you thought there was any need for such a precaution?"

He spoke with intentional levity of tone, suspecting her of a certain degree of feminine malice or domestic retaliation; but she seemed so painfully disconcerted by the implied reproof, gently as it was hinted, that another possible motive occurred to him.

“I am sorry that I cannot explain what your mother has not chosen to tell you ; but, if you can trust my assurance, it is nothing that need disturb you. I do not know the exact purport of her visit, but I can guess pretty certainly the general nature of the matter about which she wants to consult me. It is no new trouble, Ivy ; she is nervous as of old, and exaggerates everything connected with the subject. Indeed you may believe me ; there is no cause for uneasiness.”

Less from his words than from his manner, which was hesitating and awkward, yet evidently strove to be kind, Ivy gathered that her mother’s present secret was indeed no novelty ; that it was at most a new phase, a further consequence of that fatal mystery which had so suddenly enveloped her young life in an ice-cold darkness—a mystery so terrible that it had quelled Ethert’s resolute temper, overborne his judgment, bewildered his conscience, and compelled him not merely to take himself, but to urge upon her, a step he had abhorred—she had learnt too late how bitterly. She was silent for a moment, and rather pale ; then a slight flush

coloured her face, her lip quivered, and tears trembled in her soft, wistful eyes.

“I understand—too well, Ethert; you cannot tell me, and I must not ask. But do let me say one word; do not, pray do not, make any more sacrifices for us. I ought not to say it, perhaps, because I do not know what it was; but I can think of no danger, no sorrow, that would have been worth the price you have paid to avoid it.”

“Or you, Ivy,” he answered, sadly. “God forgive me if I erred; but we have paid too dearly for the keeping of this secret not to keep it to the end—if possible. But—I would bear very much to keep it; still there are things a man must not—that it is not wise to bear. I shall do my best; but, if ever you do learn the truth, don’t hastily conclude that it is my fault. I may make mistakes, but it will not be from grudging anything necessary for the object that—that was once thought worth so cruel a wrong to you.”

“A wrong to both of us, I think,” she answered, very gently, and not unkindly or even bitterly, turning half aside to conceal the tears

that would not be kept back. "And yet, if you had felt differently, if you could have forgiven, I should hardly have thought of it—certainly I should never have told you, by word or look or deed, that I had anything to complain of or regret, much less repent. Then—good night, then, Ethert."

If Ivy felt some natural pain the next morning at her distinct exclusion from the conference held in her husband's study—the confidence between the two nearest and dearest to her in the world, which so deeply, so certainly, affected herself, yet from which she was shut out—she was at once too just and too humble to dream of complaint or resentment. Ethert's words had left one clear impression on her mind: it was for her sake, it was out of tenderness or pity for her that he would not permit her to know, while it could possibly be kept, anything of the secret that had cost her so dearly.

"Yes, I see," Ethert said, after perusing a letter placed in his hand by Lady Glynne. "It is the same thing, Aunt, and you must leave it in my hands and Mr. Brand's. The man feels that he has lost his hold upon us, now that he

can no longer threaten a prosecution for felony. He has tried to deal with Brand and failed; he thinks I do not know, or chooses to pretend to think so, and fancies he can extort money from you—that you will not see so clearly as men do how utterly powerless he is. He cannot tell his story without branding himself as an accomplice and a scoundrel, without ruining his position and his own fortune.”

“Are you sure of that, Ethert? Has he so much to lose? And would an ugly story in England damage him very much abroad, where he might tell it as he pleased?”

“Mr. Brand thinks so, Aunt: and, at any rate, we cannot allow ourselves to be bullied; still less can we allow him to pass us over and deal with you. It was a part of our compact that the matter should be left in my hands. You may be very sure I shall not lightly run the risk of a disclosure which we thought it worth such a price to avoid.”

“Ethert, it pains me to hear you still speak in that bitter, resentful tone. It was of course a terrible, perhaps an unjust sacrifice, that I asked from you then. But surely *now*—surely

Ivy cannot have given you further cause to repent it; and if not——”

She could not go on, could not express in words the strong and natural maternal feeling, that her daughter's husband had hardly right or reason still to resent the compulsion that had given him such a wife as Ivy. And while Ethert felt that the reality was even worse than the anticipation—that the worst was perhaps yet to come, and that disappointment, irritation, and unhappiness were envenomed by the daily tortures of remorse—he felt also that, even before her own mother, he was bound to regard Ivy's feelings rather than his own; that her perfect loyalty and all-enduring patience must silence resentment even where it was most keenly felt and most justly directed.

“The sacrifice to me,” he said, “was at the time greater than you knew or could have understood. But let that pass. What you might, perhaps should, remember, what makes me feel that my marriage has bound me to regard the keeping of your secret as almost the paramount duty of my life, is not what it has cost me, but—what it has cost Ivy.”

The mother chose deliberately to pass over the latter words, conveying as they did a reproach to which there was no answer. She could not but feel more doubtful now than at first whether she had not really sacrificed for ever her daughter's happiness; whether, in remembering and relying on Ivy's affection for her cousin, she had not utterly overlooked the possibility that that affection might only render more painful, more intensely susceptible, her consciousness of Ethert's reluctance, indifference, or antipathy. A new alarm impelled her to ask hastily:—

“Do you mean, Ethert, that you had made another choice which you were forced to forego?”

“Do you think, if I had, I should answer such a question now?” he replied, indignantly. “At any rate, negatively at least, in heart as in act, I am loyal to my promise; and Ivy has and shall have no rival. That addition to her wrongs I can spare her.”

It was a venturous, perhaps an impracticable promise; or might seem so to those whose theories of love are derived from poetry and

fiction, rather than from the experience of life. But Ethert felt, and was probably right in feeling that, at least to a temper like his own, a marriage without love tended not to render illegitimate or wandering affections attractive, but rather to make all women hateful by the bitterness and pain inseparably associated with her who must of necessity more or less represent her sex to him.

“I wish,” he added, after a pause, “you would send the man’s letters in future to Brand, and not here. Ivy saw that you had written when you enclosed his last, announcing his patient’s death. Some wives would have opened the letter; and it is not fair to Ivy or to me to remind us both of the want of confidence between us.”

“You think he will write again? Oh! Ethert, I am frightened! And if the man comes over as he threatens to do, and comes down to Glynnehurst while I am there alone . . . I wish you would live there—I should be only too glad to leave it. You do not like London; I do not think Ivy is well here; and, whatever your feeling may be, surely you will not persist in sacri-

feeling both your own comfort and hers to a mere sentiment or punctilio of pride? You know you must overcome it soon or late—why not at once?”

“I never mean to abandon my profession. If you can persuade Ivy to return with you, so much the better; I dare not suggest it.”

“But, Ethert, are you sure? Do you believe these letters? Is she really dead; or is it some trick to spring a mine upon us at some future moment?”

“My dear Aunt, that is mere nervous distrust, however natural. What could he do? Yes, we have made the fact and the date of her death only *too* certain.”

“Did you ever doubt? Ethert, was there ever a chance, a possibility?” she said, eagerly.

“No, Aunt. Do you think I was not fully satisfied, absolutely certain of that before I—do you think I left a shadow of doubt as to the necessity?”

“Ivy,” said her mother, when they were left alone for awhile, Meta’s tact or a pride that supplied its place keeping her even more out of

the way than Ivy wished or liked, "London does not suit either you or Ethert. Can you not persuade him to leave it?"

"You think he is looking ill?" Ivy asked, anxiously, and evading the question.

"Yes, I am sure of it, dearest. And—I don't want to frighten you, and I don't suppose there is any reason for fear—but there is something, a change in his manner, a sort of eager, half irritable excitement that reminds me—it is only very distantly—of your father's state months before the first attack."

"Mamma!" Ivy exclaimed, in a terror which, for the moment, rather gratified than pained her mother, as indicating a deeper, warmer feeling than she had supposed still to exist. There was no indifference while a mere hint of danger to Ethert could so whiten a face whose colour did not change easily or quickly, and even the soft, rosy lips.

"I only meant this, Ivy: At that time your father could scarcely sleep, and Mr. Orme told me that that was often the first sign of mischief, seldom very dangerous where it was dealt with in time, except with men of your

father's age and shattered constitution. Unless Ethert's rest is disturbed—and that you must know,—my doubt has no meaning, and if it is, you can get him to take advice ; or, if he would leave London, that alone would no doubt restore his health entirely, and I am sure you need the change too.”

Ivy remained for a minute or more absolutely silent, and then, passing over the details of the suggestion that had seemed at first so deeply to disturb her, only answered,

“I am afraid it is useless ; Ethert has made up his mind. But,” endeavouring to turn the conversation, “I am well enough, and he is careful that I shall not find London too dull.”

Very dissatisfied with the match she had made, and, with true feminine injustice, ready to blame any one rather than herself, Lady Glynn would by preference no doubt have accused Ethert of ill-temper, unkindness, want of feeling, for not appreciating Ivy's sweetness. But she was almost as willing to accuse Ivy of selfishness and indifference, if she could so throw the responsibility of the unhappiness she strove not to recognize as such upon another

than herself, even upon her daughter. She would not acquiesce in or accept the intended evasion.

“Is that all you think of? I daresay you fancy, and perhaps you have, reason to complain; but you knew what you were doing. You could not expect from Ethert at once the warm, eager affection he would have given to a wife of his own choice; but, even if he did not care for you, or you for him, a wife should have sufficient sense of duty to regard what concerns her husband’s health.”

Ivy was offended, almost angered, not by the injustice of the reproach, but by the words that implied, presumed some coldness, some discontent existing between her husband and herself.

“It may be that I have not done my duty by Ethert, and I will say nothing about that; but, Mamma, I will not allow any one, even you, to suggest that Ethert has not been all, more than all I could have hoped or wished. He has never crossed a fancy of mine, has been kind, indulgent to a fault, and, if he is not so well, I think it is chiefly because, after all his

hard night work, he will think only of giving me all the time, all the attention he can, all the pleasure he can find for me, and never of resting, of sparing himself. And, if I have been careless, inconsiderate, that is another thing; but you have no right to say, to think that I do not love him with all my heart! Mamma, I do not want to say anything I should not say to you, but I will never hear a word, a hint of that kind again."

The indignant words, and still more the passionate expression in the eyes, the slight flush which, in Ivy's somewhat colourless face, sufficed to manifest unusual warmth of feeling, conveyed a rebuke that once more rather comforted than hurt her mother. If under the impulse of selfish terror she had lightly regarded her daughter's rights, or even her daughter's welfare, Lady Glynne yet loved her as sincerely as so weak a nature well could love; and certainly wished to believe that she had not, in protecting her own and her child's honour, insured Ivy's lifelong misery. Silenced for the time, she was not so impressed as to be on her guard for the future against the kind of

intrusion to which, in proportion to the unreality of the conjugal contentment she affected, Ivy was sure to be sensitive.

“You must find a girl like Meta a somewhat troublesome charge, or, at any rate, a somewhat awkward encumbrance, Ivy? I can understand how reasonable Ethert’s wish to give her a home after his mother’s death would seem to you, how difficult it would be to object; but I am sorry it has been done. It hardly shows the consideration I should have expected from him; and if, or when, an opportunity offers, my child, you will do well quietly to relieve yourself of such a charge.”

The recollection of her last outbreak rendered Ivy comparatively patient, averse at first to interrupt, reluctant at last to say more than seemed absolutely necessary.

“I am most glad of Meta’s society,” she said. “She is a great comfort, a great pleasure to me; and it was my doing, not Ethert’s.”

“Yes, you would think he expected, looked for it from you. But Meta is very pretty, very interesting, and, as she grows older, is just one to attract the fancy of a poetic dreamer; and

men in middle life think more of, are more attracted by, extreme youth than are very young men. And you or Charlie told me that Meta was the heroine of one of Ethert's romances. I had not recognised her myself, knowing so little of her. Ivy, for your own peace, I think you will be wise to find an opportunity of parting with her while as yet she is too nearly a child for Ethert to care very much."

"You ought to know," Ivy began, in a tone so calm, so self-controlled, that, not looking in her face, Lady Glynne thought her counsel had made some impression—"you ought to know, whatever else you may fail to appreciate in him, that Ethert is true—that he would never do underhand what he would not do openly. If he had chosen that I should keep Meta with me whether I liked or not, he would have told me, and I should have obeyed. If he had wished me to wish it, he would have asked me, persuaded me, and I should have been too glad to please him. A *woman* would be ashamed to steal a favour in that way. How can you know him so little, after all? But it was my doing, against Ethert's will; not only because I knew

how fond he is of Meta—and well he may be—nor only because she was his ward, and would always have been part of his home, as she had been till his marriage; but because I love her, and because, his work leaving me so much alone, I wanted such a companion. He seemed to think of me as ill as you do, and now I begin to understand his objections. I suppose he thought I could be jealous, as you think he could give me cause. Now, Mamma, this is the last, the very last, time I will speak to you or hear you speak about any matter that concerns Ethert, or me, or our household. You have gone too far, and I believe I ought to tell Ethert what you have said. He would have good right to be angry with me for listening to it; he would not care to show his anger if he were angry with you. But understand, please, however I have failed, as you say, in my duty to him, I am true, I am loyal to my husband; and whatever he did, if he could stoop to be harsh or unkind, I would never appeal—no, I mean I would never allow a word, a look, to pity me or reproach him. As it is, I know, and you ought to know it, he

will do what is right and just: and if not, his fault will always be as it has been, to be too thoughtful, too indulgent to me. I do not know that I ought even to say so much, but I will never speak or hear again good or ill about him from you or from any one else. I belong to him, and it is not your business what he shall do with his own."

Ivy's temper was so thoroughly roused that, contrary to her wont even in the keenest excitement of which she was capable, her voice had risen and become almost shrill—it could never be loud or sharp—in the last sentences. As she ended, she rose hastily and left the room, conscious that her self-control was too utterly exhausted, her spirit too much aroused, to enable her to preserve the appearance of filial respect, if any further provocation should be offered to her wifely loyalty.

They were now so seldom alone together that Ivy had no opportunity of repeating her mother's accusations to Ethert till after Lady Glynne had left town—not for Glynnehurst, but for what seemed likely to be a somewhat protracted round of visits. By that time the young

wife had had leisure to reflect, to perceive that the confidence she had half-promised could do no good, and was likely to entail consequences from which she shrank with exaggerated timidity. She knew Ethert too well to fear angry words or looks, or even sarcasm; but—would he not misunderstand her motive, fancy that she agreed with—was disturbed by her mother's hints? might he not suppose—she knew not what? Had they been on happier terms, she would hardly have hesitated to keep silence, or feared to speak. As it was, her very alarm impressed upon her sensitive conscience the idea that confession was the more obligatory: she must be to blame if she were afraid or ashamed to tell anything to her husband.

“Ethert, will you hear me kindly? I don't ask you not to scold me, if I deserve it; but don't misunderstand; do believe that I mean only what I say, and have only one motive for speaking—because I can't bear to be afraid to tell you anything. Do be kind to me this once.”

“I am not given to credulity, Ivy; and I should find it very hard to believe you—untrue or insin-

cere, But why tell me anything that needs such a preface? Remember, I have no right to your confidence—as I could have no right to be displeased with you for anything that may have happened.”

“No right that your wife should tell you the truth—no right to be displeased with her conduct? You might as well say I don’t belong to you! Is that kind, Ethert? Have I deserved it?”

“I did not mean it unkindly. You have deserved—that I should trust without calling you to account, and absolve you without exacting a confession. Unless you want my help or advice, there is no reason why you should say anything you do not wish to tell.”

She looked up, shyly and timidly, but encouraged and comforted by the gradual softening of his tone. It had lost all touch of sarcasm or bitterness; and when his eyes met her own, and answered her appeal with something that was almost a smile, she read therein a confidence perfectly sincere and kindly. It was in such looks and tones that she found the scanty comfort of her life. She could not

clearly interpret their expression, full of reverence for her truth and purity, often of almost remorseful compassion for her hard position, of gratitude for the patient submission and unwavering loyalty that had been so ill-requited. She felt that Ethert trusted and esteemed her; she failed at such times to understand that the trust implied no cordial sympathy, the esteem no love.

“You will be kind, and tell me where I was wrong? I cannot see; but I feel that a wife must be in fault when any one can blame her husband in her presence.”

“I understand perfectly, Ivy; you need tell me nothing. Don’t you see that it is a comfort to your mother to throw on me as much as she can of a burden which otherwise must rest on her own shoulders? Or do you suppose I think it strange either that you betray your unhappiness, or that you cannot quite reject her sympathy?”

“Reject! Indeed, I did my best to stop her; and I don’t think she will speak again. Will you not believe that I am loyal to you, Ethert; that I would not let anybody else pity me, what-

ever you were to do? But she did not begin in that way. She asked a question I could not answer, and then supposed I did not care, because you—were not fond of me; and afterwards she spoke about Meta—almost as you did—as if I could wish you did not like her, or thought——”

“Remember, Ivy, I did not wish you to keep her; I foresaw that you would think so. Now——”

“Ethert! Did I not beg you to be kind—to trust me—not to misunderstand? That was the one thing that made me fear to speak! Oh, do not be so hard! do believe me; did I ever lie to you? I was ashamed, indignant, sorry; I could not help telling you, because I did *not* think . . . How can you and mamma both think so ill of me? What have I ever said or done to deserve it? Oh Ethert! how can you not believe me?”

“I believe you with all my heart,” he answered, warmly and earnestly. “You could not bear not to tell me that you had listened to reproaches against me; but you feared lest I should think you meant to hint—perhaps to ask

me indirectly if there were any truth in your mother's fears. You mean that you were only surprised that she and I both saw a danger that you cannot recognise. I believe that is just what you thought, neither more nor less. Are you content?"

"Ah, yes! Thank you, Ethert; you understand better than I can tell you! Ah, if you would always understand and believe me!—But you will never speak again of parting with Meta? You see I must feel that it is not her fault, but mine; not that you are displeased with her, but that you have ceased to think well of me. You will never suspect me of that?"

"I am sure at present, Ivy, you are 'too wholly true to dream untruth' in me. I wish it may always be so: for—remembering what Meta is to both of us, and how she came to fill the place of a younger sister to both—I could no more forgive the suspicion than you could pardon the sin."

CHAPTER VI.

THE FIRST FLASH.

“**H**AVE you seen this paragrah in the *Age*, Lestrangle?” I said one afternoon, when we happened to be alone. “I suppose it is levelled at Glynne? It is a blackguard thing. Ten years ago it would have been held to disgrace any newspaper, but these ‘Society journals’ have brought in the hateful American fashion of attacking or praising individual journalists, not the papers they represent.”

“That is not so new,” he replied. “I remember a quarter of a century ago, when the teetotallers threatened to avenge a sarcastic article of mine in the *Biennial Review* by publishing that it was my writing, and that I was the author of certain so-called Atheistic speculations in another journal. Yes, I have seen the *Age*.”

"Is it meant for Glynne?" I said, reading it out.

"Baronets have undertaken all sorts of work, from the stage-coach to the stage, but hitherto, we believe, always from that pecuniary necessity from which the 'blood-red hand' confers no universal exemption. It is strange, but we believe true, that one of the order is at this moment employed in a secondary position on a somewhat struggling contemporary. Even bucolic intellect may well reach the level of our contemporary's literary requirements. The strange part of the story is that the gentleman in question, just before his accession to the title, acquired by marriage the extensive and very valuable estates hitherto attached to it. For some reason or other, however, he did not succeed to a seat in Parliament which had been considered for many generations quite as much an appanage of the House as its mansion or its mines; and the circumstances are altogether so peculiar that society may expect one day to be entertained with a piquant, and perhaps even an original, *chronique scandaleuse*."

"Now," said Lestrangle, "where is the point,

the wit, the pith, the interest of that? Except that there is a story somewhere, and that the hero of that story is a man of position and fortune, there is nothing to pique curiosity, to interest or amuse anybody. And yet a dozen such paragraphs form the real *raison d'être* of that paper, and sell it so well that it can afford a monthly thrashing and a quarterly libel suit."

"Has Butler got thrashed lately?"

"Don't you know?" said Lestrangle. "He keeps a prize-fighter on the premises; but his vanity is too strong for his prudence. He must go down to the True Blue Club, to prove that that somewhat exclusive body cannot get rid of one who has been black-balled at half the others; and there Glynne caught him, and caned him *sans phrase*, yesterday."

"I gave Glynne credit for more good sense."

"So did I," said Lestrangle, coolly, "till lately. But he is losing his head, I think; certainly more than merely his temper. Of course we know there is something strange. It would not be strange that he should choose to express his political opinions in the press, if he will not go into Parliament. It is very strange that he

has not only refused a safe parliamentary seat, but persists in doing the mill-horse work of an Editor's assistant for an insignificant pittance, and, if I am not far wrong, at a cost no money can compensate. The kindest thing I could do would be to quarrel with him. My doctor saw him here the other day, and confirmed my own apprehension that either over-work, or sleeplessness, or some form of irritation, is telling on his brain. Six months ago he would not have touched a cad like Butler on much stronger provocation. But mystery alone is likely to involve irritation; what looks worse is that his memory, his quickness, his judgment, as well as his temper and nerve, are failing him. I wish he would give up, but I cannot go further than to tell him that he is doing worse than killing himself."

"What is the matter, Lestrangle? What is his story?"

"If I knew, of course I could not tell you. I know no more than we all know: that he married, very suddenly, his uncle's very young heiress, almost immediately after her brother's death, and before her father's. Evidently it

was a family arrangement, by which he came into a splendid fortune, with that for which men of thrice his wealth would give half their incomes—a certain family seat in Parliament. Everyone, of course, said that he married for money, a thing to which Glynne of all men would be keenly sensitive; and yet neither money nor interest has done anything for him. He works scarcely less hard than a reporter, for something like a first-rate reporter's salary; and has not only refused to enter Parliament, but has actually thrown away the patronage of the seat for Stapleton, a patronage which might have purchased a peerage if he cared for it. Those who heard the story at third-hand said, equally of course, that a marriage so sudden, hasty, almost secret, with so very young a girl was a monstrous injustice, a scandalous advantage taken of her; and yet it was taken by her own parents. Now I suppose you can make of these facts just as much and as little as I can?"

"And what is that?"

"First, the thing is not what it looks; I don't believe that Glynne would do, could do what he seems to have done. If there is a man

in this world who would not marry for money, even under the provocation of an impecunious title, it is he. Some men who would marry for money would hesitate to entrap so young a girl; and of all men Glynne is the least likely to have done it. Evidently he is furious, embittered by the consciousness that he seems to have done the very things by which he would feel most righteously disgraced, and yet cannot explain or deny; and takes it out in demonstrating to himself, if not to the world, that he gains nothing by his marriage;—I wish it may not be that he cares nothing for his bride. Poor thing! if she saved a family law-suit, which is the obvious inference, it was cruel to marry a child of seventeen with no choice, no knowledge of men or life, to a man of thirty, who, if I am not mistaken, bitterly resents what, for some reason or other, he could not refuse.”

“All the facts look the other way, Lestrangle. Surely a marriage for money is an every-day thing; and, if the girl’s parents approved, few men would scruple to take an advantage against which *they* did not protest.”

“I believe,” he answered, “in moral more than in circumstantial evidence, because we can know the one and can never confidently interpret the other. If there be such a thing as moral impossibility, that Glynne should have sold his hand, and taken an ungenerous advantage of his bride’s youth and inexperience, is doubly impossible. Besides, she loves him; I can’t be wrong there. I may not live, you will, to see that *esclandre* which Butler has paid for predicting. Then, remember what I say; it will prove that Glynne has been the dupe of an intrigue, or more probably the martyr of a Quixotism. I would hazard an even bet, moreover, that, like most Quixotisms, it has been a thorough blunder, failing in the very purpose for which it was intended.”

“You think that Quixotism, or what Glynne and I should call chivalry, is always a blunder?”

“Generally, for this reason—that it is never thoroughly carried out; it involves an endeavour to do something beyond ordinary human virtue, and a man conscious of such supererogatory merit is pretty sure to take it out in

some form of petty injustice or unkindness—veiled from his eyes as from others by the blaze of his generosity—which mars the whole.”

“A foreign gentleman wishes to see the Editor.”

“I will see him,” said Lestrangle. “No, don’t leave the office” (to me), and, as the stranger entered, in a lower tone, “Sit down and seem to take no notice. This looks like a case for eye-witness.”

I half caught my chief’s meaning. The newcomer certainly looked a rascal, a well-dressed man whose dress so contrasted his countenance and bearing as to suggest disguise—a croupier, marine-store dealer, or black-leg masquerading in the garb of a gentleman. I could instinctively understand that he was one with whom Lestrangle, compelled, as Editor, to hold amicable or at least civil conversation with men whom, as an individual, he would have preferred to kick, did not choose to be alone; that he chose to preclude the risk either of a false report or of dispute with such a personage as to what might really pass between them. The visitor’s thick, crisp, curly, black hair, close cut all over

his head, was well, rather more than well, oiled; his face had a strong Jewish cast, though not stronger than I have seen in some that owed nothing of their cunning to the blood of the Supplanter; and there was a sort of dangerous, serpent-like look in the eyes that faced yours with a conscious effort, steady enough and never quailing, but always drooping when, for a moment, the necessity to sustain their gaze was forgotten.

“Mr. Hartog?” said Lestrangle, glancing at his card.

“Yes, sir,” said the stranger, with an accent half American, half German. “I understand that this paper has changed hands, has a way to make, and I can offer you what will help to sell your journal, to make it read and talked about—a good scandal about a distinguished English family, a late member of Parliament. No fear of libel, sir; it is a truth, and a truth that ought to be published. It is a case in which there should have been what you call a criminal procedure—proceeding; but it is too late, for the man is dead. But there has been a great fraud, and a nobleman has been tricked into a disreputable marriage.”

“Indeed!” Lestrangle said, with a light in his eye, a very slight sarcastic curl of the lip, which, to me, who watched him furtively from behind my paper, indicated a dangerous mood, of which the stranger was wholly unconscious. “Had you not better go to the police?”

“No, sir. The police will not pay for my secret, and neither will the man who should have bought it. He had the insolence to send me to his solicitor. He shall repent of it! See, in the year 1844, an English baronet, a member of Parliament, married a German lady in America. Here is a copy of the certificate—it was all in order. He came back; he lived a little while with her as his wife in London, and came abroad. Then she grew troublesome, or they quarrelled, and he kept her out of the way of his English friends. He did not come back to England for some years. Then in 1860 he did come back, and did marry in Paris, saying that his first wife was dead; and, indeed, the story of her death had been published in your papers before. He had a son and daughter. The son was killed, and the daughter married, married very quick, to the heir, so to

snap him up, lest the story should be told, while he thought she was a fortune. Now I know, and I can prove that all this while the first wife was living, but was shut up in a hospital, what you call a lunatic asylum, in South Germany. Now, Sir Carl paid well to have the secret kept while he could be punished for bigamy; but, now he is dead, his solicitor says the heir will pay nothing, and when I write to the widow—or who calls herself the widow—she answers me through the solicitor, and will give me nothing. Now, what will you give me to put these in your hands? All the papers, see! and here is the name, Sir Charles Glynne, Baronet, M.P. for Stapleton.”

“What will I give you?” said Lestrangle, quietly. “We will talk about that in a minute; let me see the papers. Yes—and you are the keeper of the asylum in question; no other authority would be sufficient; besides, you have admitted it.”

“I do not admit it, sir, but you may assume it.”

“Very well; are you aware that you have been an accomplice; that in this country you

are liable to prosecution as an accessory before the fact to the bigamy?"

I thought Lestrangle's law somewhat doubtful, but knew better than to interfere, leaving him to play his game in his own way.

The stranger was startled. "No, sir, I do not know it, and I do not think so; besides, I do not care. I shall put these papers in your hands when we shall come to terms, and you will make your game of them, whether to make them pay you to hold your tongue, or unhold your pen—ha, ha! or to publish the story and maintain public virtue, and the circulation of your paper. But, of course, you will pay me handsomely—something down, well, and something, say one-half of what he gives you, or she gives you, and—or something down altogether, say five hundred pounds."

Lestrangle's sharp ring of the bell was answered by a stalwart porter, long in his service, and accustomed to obey very implicitly his quaint and uncertain humours.

"Five hundred pounds," said Lestrangle. "How much did you receive from this Sir Charles whilst he was living?"

“That was for the care of the lady, sir; one thousand a year.”

“And what has the solicitor offered you at present?”

“He had the insolence, sir, to offer me two hundred a year for my life only; and I would far rather take one thousand down, but he would give me nothing except so long as the secret was kept.”

“I understand,” Lestrangle replied; in a tone so cool, so quiet that I, who knew how utterly revolting, how intensely offensive to him must have been the proposal which assumed him to be a scoundrel—having, moreover, that general experience which has taught any man by the time he reaches middle life that when a quarrel may impend it is silence, not loud and furious language, that threatens violence—became not a little alarmed; measuring the probable force of the explosion by that of the suppression, of which I alone was aware. “So I am to give you five hundred pounds, and to recoup myself by the power these papers will afford me over the honour and happiness of a family—the power of dishonouring a respectable matron, a

young wife, and a husband of rank, fortune, and character?"

"Yes, sir, you see it exactly as it is."

"That is, you propose to me to levy black mail on joint account by a practice of which the vilest paper in England or America—the *Age* or the *New York Chanticleer*—might be ashamed; and you ask what I will give you? I have told you what the English law will give you, if you are found in England when, a few hours hence, the solicitor knows what you have proposed to me."

"Sir!" said the German. "You have not listened to me to betray me?"

"I have listened to a felon with the full intention of handing him over to justice. But, as you say, I owe you something on my own account, and you shall have it at once. Maddox, kick this fellow downstairs—*kick* him soundly!"

Five seconds had elapsed before, grasping the scoundrel by the coat-collar and waistband, Maddox had ejected him from the room; and the sound of scuffling, clattering, howling, and blows outside, gradually descending the long

winding staircase from the second floor to the street, rendered us aware how literally Lestrangle's servant was executing his command. He came up presently, less out of breath with the exertion than was Lestrangle with passion, and I myself with mingled surprise, amusement, and consternation. Lestrangle had certainly rendered himself liable to an action for assault; but I apprehended more the possibility of retaliatory violence he was equally unfit to resist or to endure.

"I have kicked him out, sir. Waited a minute; he didn't seem to want any more."

"Thank you," Lestrangle said, quietly, counting out five sovereigns from the drawer where he kept what was entered as "editorial petty cash" in the books, what he called the "secret service fund." "If he comes back, repeat the dose, and I will repeat the fee. Now," to me, when the well-satisfied porter had departed, "the fellow, of course, will not dare to complain; but whether he will believe what I told him is another thing. I should be very sorry to have the truth leak out; I would not have Glynne hear of it, if that can be avoided. How

much, I wonder, *does* he know? If I knew that, I should see my way. But if the secret has been kept from him wholly or partially—if he has only known that the estates were his through some informality, and could not bear to take them from his cousin, I cannot tell him that his wife is illegitimate—and her mother——Brand, the family solicitor, must know, I suppose; it may be best to sound him.”

“What does it all mean?” I said.

“Don’t you see, this explains all? The girl, being the daughter of an illegal, invalid marriage, or no marriage, could not inherit as her father’s child. For Glynne to claim the estates was to tell the story; and, if he knew that, he has preferred to bear the accusation, which to his mind must be so intolerably galling, of marrying for her money a girl too young to know what she was doing. I don’t wonder he has been bitter, savage, sore, ever since; I only hope no share of the punishment has fallen on that poor girl.”

“Does that explain another thing that puzzled me:—why she consented to adopt that pretty child?”

“A very pretty kitten indeed, but, if I am not utterly ignorant of physiognomy, one that can scratch. A woman of five and twenty, especially one who would slap her hard on occasion in the master’s absence, might have found her a sufficiently pleasant plaything; but that young girl had either no choice, or a simple, trustful courage one sometimes finds most perfect in the softest women. Her story might furnish you the plot and the characters of a quieter novel than your last.”

“Hardly, Lestrangle, while critics will insist that my hero is my ideal of manly sense and dignity. It would be easy to idealise the little we know of Lady Glynne into a faultless heroine of the softer feminine type; but there is nothing of the hero about her husband.”

“He has a fine and, in some points, a very generous character; but he has far too much of that feminine element which, as some man of genius said, is always characteristic of the poetic type of genius. Like a woman above all in this—he is *never* reasonable. Clear-sighted, gifted with rare powers of expression, sensitive, susceptible, sympathetic, after a woman’s

fashion, with those characters which he can understand; but perverse, petulant, wilful almost to a womanly degree. And of one thing you may be quite sure, if you attempt to describe Ethert Glynne truthfully—that nine critics in ten will pronounce the character inconsistent and impossible. I never met a man at all like him, and I never expect to meet another. I know many men who *think* like women; I never met a man who *felt* so much more after a woman's fashion than that of ordinary manhood. Well, I must—not sleep, that I never do, but—lie awake over it. Now that I hold the clue, perhaps I may find a way to further the happy solution of the plot. I hope Cleveland will bring his wife to town—do you know?”

“I did not know he was coming up. When?”

“This week. Now, have you looked carefully into those Fortune Bay papers? If you have, say what you think, not what you feel. Write as if Jefferson Davis were in the State Office at Washington.”

CHAPTER VII.

THREATENING OF THE STORM.

“**E**THERT, you are ill, worn out! Yes, I have seen it; I have watched and feared ever since I spoke first, though I dared not speak again, and Mamma noticed it when she was here. Now, Parliament will be up presently, and already, Mr. Lestrangle says, nobody cares to read about it. You might, you surely might take a holiday, a rest, if only a short rest. Ethert, you know you can if you will. You love the country; you used to love Glynnehurst as dearly as I do. I saw myself—what Meta once told me, what you owed to her—how unhappy, how depressed the Spring in London made you, how sad you have been ever since the horse-chestnuts were in bloom in the parks. Now, because I love it, because you

wish—I think you wish—to be kind to me when it—when you can without seeming to care for me—it would be so great a pleasure, so much comfort if you would take us there now, before its summer beauty fades, while the gardens are still at their brightest. Or else, if you will not go there because—because you hate it for being—because you call it mine, both you and Meta love the Lakes so dearly, and I was so happy there with you both;—let us go there. Will you not, Ethert? Remember, it is only the second time I have asked you to do anything for me.”

“When was the first, Ivy? Oh! you mean Pearl? And this too is really for my sake, not your own. It would be much harder to refuse, Ivy, if you did ask anything for yourself. Of course you shall go whenever you please—nay, Ivy, I did not mean to hurt you; for, even while your mother is away, if you were at Glynnehurst with Meta, I could accept the offer that was made me last week; the only difficulty was that I could not leave you in London. Lestranger wants a confidential account of matters in France. It would give me a capital

opportunity of making acquaintance with the chiefs of the Right; and, if you were at Glynnehurst, I could go."

"Ethert, is that kind—is it right? I should not be happy, I should not feel safe for a day if you were away alone. No; unless you command it, I will never go to Glynnehurst without you, and I do not think you will command me; you feel that I am right."

He could not contradict her. She was unquestionably right from her standpoint, and in all these months he had not brought her a step nearer to his own. Nothing had shaken the simple, silent resolve of her conscience. To her, as to most English wives, the marriage tie had all the sacramental sanctity with which Roman tradition has invested it; for her, as for most English wives, it derived that character from the religious ceremonial, the sacerdotal sanction, the formal vows which are historically and theologically incidents only, if not mere accidents of the Catholic sacrament. This conviction was so profoundly rooted in her very being, so evidently unquestioning and unquestionable, that he was forced to doubt whether

her intense instinctive sense of the inherent verity of the bond, rather than the repugnance he had inferred from the presence of compulsion and the absence of love, might not have afforded the truer clue to the feelings he had honestly thought to spare. If she must hold herself irrevocably bound, would it not have been better for her, for both, if he could have resolved at the outset to accept the situation and assume that she must do so ; could have treated her as a willing bride, and by so treating her have made her, in time, thoroughly, loyally, lovingly his own? From the simple truth he was as far as ever, and meantime every mention of Glynnehurst brought home the vexed questions to his heart and conscience with more painful sharpness. As he remained silent, Ivy saw that she had made an impression, though she had not the remotest idea of the working of his mind, of the considerations that gave weight to her argument and point to her entreaties. Hope gave her courage, and she urged her appeal more firmly, more earnestly than she had yet dared to do.

“Ethert, I am not asking you to break your resolution. If you will not touch what you call your wife’s—Ethert, what would you think of me if I could speak, if I could remember what was yours, not mine?—you have your mother’s fortune. Is not that more than you spend on yourself and on Meta too? If you will not give up your profession, you can afford to give up your present employment, if that were necessary. You are independent, as you call it, both of that and of Oh Ethert! that is so hard; that makes every day of my life, all that happens, every pleasure, every luxury I enjoy, a fresh taunt, a continual reproach. Everything reminds me that you will not share with me—my rooms, my carriage, all you have taken care to give me—it is always ‘mine’! And it is not even true! Ethert, dare you tell me, as you would speak to a *man* of your own rank—as you say, ‘on the word of a gentleman’—that it *was* mine, and not yours? It comes at every turn. Even about Pearl you are so punctilious; not that you are unkind about her, or jealous, not that you even wish her to know that she belongs to you—but her expenses

must be yours, yours only; and I can hardly give her a present for fear you should reckon with me about it. And now, do you really mean to keep me, shut me out from our home because you are resolved that it shall not be yours? You are too honest to say that it is my own fault—do you mean that I shall not go there unless I will give way? Do you not see, feel that your wife cannot go there unless you take her? But if you hate Glynnehurst because it reminds you—of your marriage—if you cannot bear to see your mother's home without her—Ethert, do you know that *her* last word called me daughter?—then let us go abroad with you. You are not fit to be alone.”

There, as Ethert felt, she was wrong. Her presence was the danger, the exciting influence that he was anxious to escape. But of this she could not dream, nor, had she known, could she have understood it. The symptom that would have assured an experienced woman how near she was to victory would have broken the young girl's heart.

“You are mistaken on every point, Ivy. I love Glynnehurst almost as dearly as you do,

and because we spent so many happy days there together ; and—if on consideration you really wish it—our first holiday shall be spent there. But I cannot leave my work while Parliament is sitting—and, Ivy, my mother's fortune does not render me independent. I always meant it to be Meta's, and she must not be a loser by my—our marriage."

"Ethert, how could she have accepted such a gift from you ; I mean before——? Now, I suppose it is a different thing?"

"Certainly : Pearl may accept from her guardians without shame or scruple whatever we could give to a younger sister."

"We, Ethert? If it were we! May it be *our* gift? because if you will allow that——"

"No ; I could accept nothing for her any more than for myself. It would be the same thing. And what I can give her is little enough, because—I am forced to take from it sufficient to secure myself against the possibility of involuntary dependence if my power of work should fail. I will take no more."

Ivy understood his meaning more clearly than he had intended. He had spoken without

reflection, and had wounded her more cruelly than he would willingly have done. Then, looking in the face the worst of *all* human calamities—for, partly through Lestrangle's warnings, partly by combining her own observations with her mother's hints, she knew in what direction Ethert's fear of incapacitation pointed, and not without reason—then the first thought of the husband she loved so loyally, of the cousin who had at any rate a brother's claim on his nearest relative, was to escape the humiliation of being, even in that most terrible and palpable need, dependent on her abounding wealth! For a full minute she could not speak; she could only press her hand on her tortured heart, and struggle to keep down the passionate impulses of pain and mortification. But presently the consciousness of peril to him, the perception that he himself was aware of and had owned it, gave her strength to enforce her plea, earnestly but almost calmly.

“Ethert, Meta needs nothing now; while she remains with us she can hardly need more than she has already. Without injuring her, you could afford to rest for years, to look out for

other employment. And can you be so cruel to *her*? Can you not see what she would feel when she came to know? Do think: how can you be so hard to me? Think, if—if you should die or break down, if you sacrifice health and usefulness out of dislike to your wife! Ethert, how can you make me so utterly miserable? You can be spared: your own chief has told you so, told you to go abroad. And that is not all. Ethert, I cannot bear not to be true, however angry you may be. I never before concealed a thought from you, or betrayed it to any one else; but I could not help it, I could bear it no longer; and he was so kind to me, so loyal to you. When I begged of you to call on Dr. A., or Sir B. C., it was Mr. Lestranger's advice. I cannot think how any woman could have borne to leave, could have helped loving him! He gave me leave—no, he *told* me—to tell you every word he had said; he has told you—they are his own words—that you had better”—there was a sob in her voice as she spoke—“better kill yourself at once than go on. ‘He has said everything that one man can say to another; all that your relations, that his

regard for you, that thirty years' experience could give him the right to say.'—Ethert, have you seen a doctor?"

As Ivy ceased and looked eagerly into his eyes for her answer, the warning voice of the wisest of living physicians sounded once more in his ears—"You will *not* die; but, if you go on as at present for a few weeks more, your mind will give way for a time or for ever:—" and the grave face seemed visible behind his wife's slight figure.

"And," she presently continued, passionately, as he would not give in words the answer his countenance could not withhold, "Ethert, Mr. Lestrangle would not speak, would not look it, but I could see why . . . what was in his mind! You are showing him and every one else what it is. Do you think that you can avoid Glynnehurst in this way for ever, and that people will not notice; that every one will not know, soon or late, that those who know anything of us do not understand now? You are telling everybody the truth—that you hate me! It is bitter enough for me to know it; but it is not kind, it is not like you,

to let all the world see and feel it. Do you think Meta is not learning—not *that*, I will not let her—but that something is wrong?”

“Ivy, you are unreasonable. I do not mean that your advice is not sound, or that you ask more than you ought to do; but your own good sense must show you how much you wrong me, how you misrepresent my feelings. Have I ever spoken an angry word to you, ever refused a request of yours apart from this one thing, that you should think I feel less kindly to you than when . . . we accepted the necessity that has made you so unhappy? You are too honest to say, as other women might, that I did that out of spite, in order to have the power of making you miserable. If I had borne you ill-will, if I had not wished to do my very best for you—for the cousin I loved as well as anything in this world—should we be in this position to-day? I may have judged ill, Ivy; but I could not intend anything save kindness to you. You will not say, even now, that I wanted your——”

“No, Ethert; you are not mean. I do not know—the only thing I can feel about that is

that it could hardly be true kindness; or it was such kindness as you might show to a girl, even though you did hate her. If you were so sorry for me then, how is it you have no pity for me now, when my heart is breaking? I was never much loved or made of. Papa did not seem to care for any of us, and Mamma liked Charlie so much better; I used to feel, to fancy myself neglected and alone. I used to think I would like to change even with Meta—though she was so much more severely treated, and I knew how frightened and crushed I should be in her place—but only to be loved as you always loved your little Pearl. And . . . I looked forward to your visits so eagerly . . . because you were never cross, or hasty, or impatient; you had always time to be kind to me, and so . . . I fancied you were fond of me. But now, can you not think, can you not feel, what it is never to hear a kind, a loving word, if it were not for Pearl? And even Pearl seems half to doubt me. She thinks I make you unhappy, and I know too well how true that is. You think you are not cruel;—not like men who beat their wives whenever they are provoked. Even

if I had done this great wrong to you on purpose, you would be ashamed, shocked at such a thought. Is that only because you are a gentleman, because you must not strike a woman? Or, if you could stoop to it, would you find any pleasure in taking your revenge in that way? Would it not grieve you to see me so hurt, so shamed? And is not this far worse? Is it not a far more merciless punishment to be taught every day that you hate me, and to see that you are teaching others the same?"

"Don't exaggerate so, Ivy. How can you say such things?"

"Do I exaggerate? I did not mean to do so. Where is the exaggeration? Do you not hate me? Or do you think I exaggerate if I say that I would rather be beaten, a thousand times rather, if that were any satisfaction to you?"

He did not intend that Ivy should see the slight, ironical smile that curled his lip; but she caught it, and answered with passionate vehemence the thought he had not meant her to discern.

"What do you fancy makes beating so dread-

ful to women, Ethert? The smart of the blows, the disgrace that seems to lie in them, or the pain and humiliation endured from those who should love and protect us? Yes! Does it seem so strange that I would rather feel your arm grasp me ever so roughly, than see that you will never touch me? I know you think I do not observe, do not remember, how long it is since you touched me even in passing."

"Nonsense, Ivy!"

"It is true. I know you hand me into my carriage; but, Ethert, even then I can always feel how it distresses you, how much you would do to avoid it, how glad you are that Meta is there whenever you have to go with me, so that you can take the other seat. And it is not a year since you always took the place next me till it seemed yours—at table, and at church, and when we went out; and now, even at the theatre, you always put Pearl next me, not that you may talk to her—you are careful to show by your silence it is not that, as if I should not like to listen to you both—but only that you may keep away from me."

"Nonsense, Ivy!" he answered, once more.
"That is too absurd."

“No, Ethert, it is true. And in everything it is the same. You will take any trouble to avoid treating me like a wife, and to conceal that you do avoid it. Even your kindness, your courtesies all mean the same thing. The second day we had this house you had lit your cigar here, in your study; you had forgotten, it was a habit, and when I chanced to come in you threw it away, and since then you have never even lighted one indoors. You are worn out, tired till you can scarcely keep awake; but if you are resting when I come into the room, you rise as you would for a stranger. You come down at the hour you made me fix for breakfast, when I see you would give anything for another hour's sleep. You would feel my absence like a release from slavery, that you might be at rest, that you might be at liberty to be ill! I have seen once or twice when you mistook my step for Meta's. Then you were quiet, you would have taken no notice of her; but when you saw it was—your wife, then your manner, your attitude, everything changed; then you were on ceremony at once.”

“Ivy, if you choose to watch in this way, to

note everything I do or leave undone, and turn it into an affront, no man could avoid offending you."

"*Offend!* Ethert, that is not worthy of you. What have I said that is not quite true? I know how you hate lying; but I know, too, you would lie rather than confess a truth so cruel. But do you think I do not *feel*—feel so that no words could deceive me? If it were that one thing alone—men may not feel; I suppose they don't."

"Yes, that is a woman's idea. Because we don't scream, we have skins less sensitive than yours. But, Ivy, the thing has been tested, and a man's sensations are quicker, keener than a woman's."

"I don't know, Ethert; but I don't think you could treat me so if you knew how easily I recognise, how I feel it by instinct, as one knows in the dark whether one is alone. You accuse me of exaggerating, because I say you hate me. If not, what is it makes you shrink from my touch? Or do you think a woman does not feel *that* through and through? And if I knew you would always do it, I might keep

away; but—Ethert, you would think it very cruel to strike one sharp blow now and then, when I came near you, without telling me, without letting me know why or when it was coming. Is not this far more cruel? At times, I suppose when you are not on your guard, or if I take you by surprise, I can feel you shrink from my touch as I should shrink from some loathsome creature—a snake or a toad. No! you don't flinch, draw away—you would not be so discourteous to any woman; and you can control that, you can help shivering, but you cannot help the feeling, and you cannot help my feeling it.”

“Ivy, you *must* know that all that is wild exaggeration. If this were true, if I could insult you so brutally, you would have told me of it before now.”

“No, Ethert; because it is only of late that I have been sure of it myself. I don't mean that you hate me more—I hope it is not so; I think I should die if I believed that—but you do show it as you did not show it at first. Perhaps it is that you are ill, and so more sensitive or less able to hide what you feel. But

you do—you know yourself that you do—often, not always—shrink from my touch, even if my dress touches you as I come near. You would as soon it were some—you feel just as they say some people feel, who have such a loathing for a cat that they know if one is hidden in the room, and turn faint and sick. You flinch in yourself when I come near you, just in that way. What could you do that could be so hard to bear—so cruel?—so—only that you do not mean me to feel it.”

“How can I answer such an accusation, Ivy?” he replied; conscious nevertheless of the effort it cost him to look into the wistful, tearful eyes that so earnestly seconded her passionate expostulation—to meet their searching glance at once kindly and firmly, and maintain the denial he was bound to give to the charge. “How can I deal with such painful fancies? If you can believe such things, you will hardly believe my contradiction; and I cannot prove what I think when I am silent, what I feel when I do nothing. But I never had an unkind, an angry thought or feeling towards you, since I learned, in the library at Glynnehurst,

how you had been cheated into the belief on which you acted, how kind and unselfish was your real intention. Why should you fancy me so foolish and so brutal?"

"Yes, Ethert! all that would sound so just, so reasonable, if it were spoken to a stranger! Do you mean to say that we cannot understand each other, feel one another's thought, without a word, without a sign that any one else could perceive? Will you tell me, loyally and honestly, that I am wrong? Do you not shrink from my touch? I don't say you move or shiver; you are strong enough to prevent that, but you prevent it by an effort—sometimes you can hardly help it. Can you tell me—tell me so that you can expect me to believe you—that that is not true?"

No woman should put a man's truthfulness to so hard a trial, and blame him for lying. Few men would scruple at a deliberate falsehood, when it seemed due to a woman's honour or a woman's feelings, so much as did Ethert Glynne. But on this occasion, even if he had felt sure that Ivy spoke the truth, he could have done nothing but give truth itself the lie.

After a moment's reflection, he took suddenly and by surprise the hand which, had she known his intention, she might probably have withheld, and raised it to his lips, with a sense of some unreality, which was hardly unwillingness or repugnance, in the performance of the courtesy. He held it firmly for a few moments as he replied :

“ No, Ivy, I am conscious of no such feeling ; and you underrate yourself strangely if you think that any man could so feel towards you. Do be reasonable ; how is it possible to live from day to day if every motion, every look, is to be so scanned and so exaggerated ? I don't complain that you reproach me—that is natural enough, and I must bear it for the present ; but pray do try not to distress *yourself* with such extravagant fancies. I cannot stoop to touch a penny of the fortune for which all around us say and think that I hurried, cheated a young girl into an unfair, almost an unequal, marriage. Can you wonder at that feeling ?—can you not understand and forgive it ? But, beyond that, anything I can do to dispel your painful illusion, to prove that I do not requite so cruelly,

so ungenerously, your gentle forbearance, your exquisite sweetness of temper, in a situation so hard and trying, I will do. If you insist—no, if it will please you and relieve your mind—I will take you to Glynnehurst myself; I have always wished that you should regard it as your home.”

“Thank you, Ethert. Yes, you mean to be *kind* And you will take Pearl?”

“No, Ivy, *I* cannot take her; you will do as you please about it.”

“Once more, Ethert, I see! You will come to Glynnehurst because you could have come there if we—in any case; but you will come there, not as its master, but as my guest, and you will make me feel that Meta is my guest, not *ours*. Indeed it is very hard, and so needlessly hard. Do think; forgive me if I have said an angry, an unkind word; I have not meant to. But, Ethert, do think—is it not true that you are letting all about us know? Is it not certain that in a little while you will let the world understand, if you will not act as—if you persist in making it so plain to all that what is mine, or what they suppose to be

mine, shall not be yours? If you are so bent on proving that you hate the money which is called your wife's, you are proving at the same time that you hate your wife for the money's sake. Is it not so? And, if it is so, Ethert, do you wish that it shall be? Forgive me, and *do* consider."

Ethert did consider—could by no means help considering, as he walked slowly along the Embankment towards the scene of his immediate duties in that narrow region north and east of the Temple which is the local habitation of the Fourth Estate—all that Ivy had urged; asking himself how far his conscience must plead guilty to the reproaches so long restrained, and uttered at last with so little of reproachful purpose. Some things she had said were certainly true; trifles of which he had hardly been conscious, which he had never supposed perceptible to her, but which, when recalled to his memory, he could not doubt or deny. It was true that of late he had frequently, though not of set purpose but on the impulse of the moment, avoided to take the place immediately beside her—equally true that of old he had never

willingly taken any other. Why?—what did the change mean? Had he really learnt to hate her, as she had affirmed with such painful depth of conviction, such unresentful, piteous iteration? Impossible! What could hatred mean—what could such a feeling be like—between a man in the vigour of youthful manhood, full of romance and poetic sentiment, and a young girl daily developing before his eyes the freshest, sweetest, purest charms of early womanhood, perfect in spiritual as in physical beauty, whose constant effort was to please, whose deepest fear to offend him?

He had long since ceased to see in her an obstacle to his own hopes; for his former fancy had withered, vanished beyond the possibility of regret. His affection for Meta was as cordial as ever, but it was affection for a reality very different indeed from the image he had conceived; for the child companion and adopted sister growing up into healthy, high-spirited, wilful girlhood, not for the intellectual, thoughtful, spiritual mistress of his dreams. In truth, whether or not she had insensibly modified his ideal, Ivy was visibly much the more capable of representing if not

actually fulfilling it. In any difference or dispute between the two, his heart as well as his conscience sided instinctively with his wife rather than his ward. It was delicate consideration for her dependence, not sympathy with her or doubt as to her deserts, that had more than once spared Meta some unpleasantly distinct evidence of his invariable assumption that she was petulant and wayward towards a protectress only too gentle and patient.

If he were still persuaded that Ivy must desire such release as might yet be possible, that at any rate it must be welcome if she could but believe herself entitled to accept it, he no longer cared to dwell upon the thought; was no longer impatient to believe that the time was at hand when her sacrifice would have fulfilled its purpose. It grieved him, wounded him to the heart, to witness the unhappiness he had caused; and this day at least he had been strongly tempted to vindicate himself, if he could have found words which she could understand, yet which he could utter in her presence. If only she were not associated with all that had galled his pride and outraged his feelings; with the occasion

given to contempt and calumny, with the act which gave the lie direct before the world to his publicly paraded denunciation of interested marriages ! If he had been free, had been allowed to love her and to win her love before he was forced to ask and she to give her hand —if only she had not seemed an heiress, or their union had not been needful to protect her name and fortune ! In the olden days, how pleasant she had made every holiday they shared together ; what pride and pleasure he had taken in the eager affection, the almost passionate welcome of the child, the simple, happy confidence and frank kindness of the growing maiden ; how sweet had been their loyal friendship, their unrestrained, untroubled companionship, till the unwelcome suggestion of marriage had cast over it the shadow of distrust and untruth ; and how innocent she was of the selfish guile which had turned his long-cherished fraternal fondness against himself, and made capital of the affection it had encouraged and fostered !

Resentment and suspicion had not falsified Ethert's intellectual conscience or perverted the

directness of his insight. For a few weeks he had believed Ivy so far participant in his aunt's selfishness as to have accepted his hand simply to secure herself and her mother from a peril she could not understand; and had marvelled how her conscience had been reconciled to such a step. The truth had come out only by slow and almost imperceptible degrees; but, never doubting Ivy's perfect truthfulness, he had caught sight of one chief motive in the first conversation that touched on the disposal of her fortune, and then understood by what sort of misrepresentation she had been bewildered into a confused belief that in accepting his sacrifice she was in some measure requiting it. How readily, how honestly she had admitted the humiliating truth; how patiently she had endured, how loyally she had fulfilled to the uttermost the promises made but for form's sake! She could not love him of course—that was no more her fault than his—but the most loving and loved wife could not have been more true, more devoted, more forbearing.

It was natural that she should feel the change from the affectionate intimacy of their happier

days even more bitterly than he did ; inevitable that she should impute it to wilful unkindness, or even to personal dislike. What else could she think ? Long experience of married life is necessary to give men and women much insight into each other's feelings where they needs must feel diversely ; and even that experience fails to enable either party to anticipate the other's sensations in a wholly novel situation. How was it possible for a girl so young, so simple, so childlike as Ivy to understand why the wife could not possibly be what the sister-like cousin had been—no less, and no more ? It was the withdrawal of wonted regard, not the absence of a more passionate tenderness, that had inflicted so deep a wound, had made so painful and so false an impression on her mind.

No sense of wrong could have provoked her to retaliate injustice, no affront have stung her into conscious insincerity or wilful exaggeration ; her belief in his dislike was evidently sincere. Worse still, she believed in that personal repugnance which requires no aggravation from disappointed hope or mortified affec-

tion to render it exquisitely, intensely galling to feminine pride and womanly instinct; which, in any relation close enough to render it possible, is the most intolerable aspect of aversion, the most stinging and rankling of insults. Yet even this she could recognize, could speak of without resentment, only pleading that it should not be made manifest to others. Was there another of her sex, without one of the moral and personal attractions of which she could not be wholly unconscious, who could have so felt and spoken? Nay, could he himself—as man—have endured similar repulsion on her part?

Truly had Cleveland remarked on the peculiar vein of Ethert's love-poems and love-stories. They won him the favour and admiration of women, because the love they breathed was that of which women prefer to speak and hear—the love that draws its life from imagination, not from passion; that is rooted in the spiritual rather than in the earthly elements of human nature. And yet—as he took his ideal from his own visions rather than from observation and experience—he failed at the critical moment to

interpret a girl's heart; failed to read his own aright. Lestrangle, less observant than Cleveland, but educated by more varied and painful personal experiences, had written of his future secretary's sweetest idyl, "As delicate, touching, and true a picture of maiden love as ever visited a maiden's dream under the influence of the Faery Queen; as incomplete, unsubstantial, fantastic a phantom of masculine passion as ever escaped pursuit in the nightmare of a lady's sensation-novel." How came the author to lose sight of that distinction, in which half the love-tragedies of real life find their plot, which furnishes so many models to fiction, yet which most poets and novelists ignore, and hardly one clearly recognizes—the sex-difference which renders all genuine forms of platonic or impassioned affection so safe to men, so perilous to women?

How came the skilful painter of "first love" to ignore that radical distinction which makes girlish regard pass so easily into womanly love and conjugal devotion, and almost insures the youth who has reciprocated the first against the chance of returning the second? *Why* the girl

who has warmly liked a man (as friend or brother, not as father or tutor) so easily learns to love him, while the man who has simply loved a fair young cousin or intimate neighbour so rarely "falls in love" with her, is a problem beyond my powers. Probably the secret is closely akin to that on which rests the security and comfort of one marriage in three; in virtue whereof the girl who in May would have accepted with equal willingness any one of half a dozen admirers, is in December the exclusively-devoted wife of the one who chanced to ask her. Yet the writer whose favourite and most successful theme was maiden love could not, in his own case, realize the possibility that Ivy had willingly accepted, had been more than willing to love with all the tenderness and devotion of her nature, the husband who had been before marriage the object of her warmest affection, her closest confidence and most absolute trust. Chiefly, perhaps, because his own vehement revolt from the marriage enforced upon him, if only *as* enforced, at first absorbed his thought, and he read her feelings, interpreted her every act

and word by the light of that angry fire within his own soul: because of late the storm of contradictory passion in his breast distorted every image that fell on the agitated surface.

Whither now set the main current even of his own feelings, Ethert was in no mood clearly or correctly to discern. His was the last character to be able to turn on the tempest of his emotions the clear light of an undisturbed intellect; to analyse coolly and indifferently the elements of a moral situation in which indifference was the one temper utterly impossible. His whole nature was perturbed and embittered by the conflict of principles and passions, by the struggle of pride with duty, affectionate remembrances with recent resentment, admiration and pity with sullen consistency. Overworked and sleepless, the brain over-tasked while the heart was harassed and tortured, his physical condition had re-acted on the mind which had originally disturbed the bodily frame. He was excited and irritated to the verge of a nervous fever—of what in a less powerful mental constitution would long ago have been, what in his case, if relief were long delayed,

would soon become actual insanity—by the recurrent vexations and chronic discontent inseparable from the hopelessly false position in which he had wantonly entangled himself, co-operating with severe and unwholesome intellectual labour. He was savage with self-reproach, and stung to fury by a wholly exaggerated sense of reproach or ridicule from others.

Of one thing he was certain : Ivy misconceived and wronged him when she accused him of hating her. Was she wrong when she said that he shrank from her ? Was it not true that her presence, her voice, the touch of her soft cool hand, even at times the contact of her dress, thrilled his every nerve, every fibre of his frame, with sensations as powerful and painful as the mysterious antipathies with which she had compared them ? Perhaps the feeling of which he was conscious more resembled the convulsive distress produced, under some conditions of constitutional or artificial hyperæsthesia, by that strange sudden reversal of the psychical currents known as cross-mesmerism.

Starting from that mystic speculation as the practical question recurred to his mind—was it

true, he asked himself again, that—not by any trivial error easily corrected, but by the whole tenor of his conduct as based on the one distinct resolve with which he had married, and on which he had acted throughout—by his refusal to touch the property supposed to be hers, he was betraying to others, if not dislike of his wife, at least resentment of his marriage? Such self-betrayal he felt, even in his present frame of mind, to be no less incompatible with his self-respect than with the consideration due to Ivy's position; and doubly due to the faultless loyalty of her own conduct in that position, trying as he had made it. But—was she right as regarded the fact?—and, if so, what was he to do? The necessity of taking up his daily drudgery, had it been ten times more repulsive, was a welcome interruption to such self-questionings.

CHAPTER VIII.

WEATHER-WARNINGS.

I RECEIVED that evening two somewhat urgent telegraphic messages; one from Cleveland, announcing his arrival in London, and desiring me to meet him and one or two other of the proprietors at the office of the *Courier*; the other from Leaf—"Don't fail to breakfast with me at twelve, before you go to the *Courier*."

"You know," said the latter, when four or five of us had assembled round his table, "that there has been a discussion among our proprietors? Some of them are not satisfied, and one or two in particular are irritated on two points. They are vexed that we have not followed their leader's counsel, that our opposition has been as stubborn, uncompromising, as if the

majority were not large enough to carry anything they please; as if our best chance were not, as Lord —— said, to moderate and mould rather than to resist their measures. On this point, as you know, I differed with Lestrangle, as many of us did. Their other grievance lies in our personal treatment of themselves. They are too ignorant of journalism to see how important it is that we should seem to be wholly independent alike of the party and of individual members. Now, whether we agree with our chief or not, I think we are bound to be loyal to him; to hold together as a Cabinet would, and, if he resigns, to resign with him. There is no point in our course that he has not frankly and fully discussed with us, none to which I do not hold that we are all bound by the result of the consultation.”

“But,” said another, “Lestrangle has always taken his own way at last; has never put anything to a vote by which the minority might be pledged.”

“Of course not,” said Leaf, somewhat significantly. “Do you forget the fundamental maxim of true Conservatism, that you must

weigh votes, and not count them? There are three votes at that council that must outweigh all the rest, if only because the *Courier* could not, if it would, dispense with them. But it is not true that Lestrangle has taken his own course. He has decided for himself, no doubt, but he has never taken his own way in the teeth of the general opinion of his colleagues. The policy of the *Courier* is the common policy of its staff, and I repeat that in my opinion we must stand or fall with our chief."

To this, after a few more words, we all agreed.

"Is there going to be trouble then?" I asked.

"I don't know," replied Leaf. "Cleveland is sure to stand by us on the second point, and probably Lestrangle will yield on the first if Cleveland differs with him. What the result will be I cannot guess; probably it depends on the temper of the man who presides, and on the answer to a question I mean to put."

Walking down, we were joined by Cleveland, who, after a brief conference with Leaf, fell back and walked with me, my colleagues somewhat in front.

“The way,” he said, “to deal with reasoning creatures in an unreasonable mood is—at least, so I have always found—to let them talk out their unreason. Then, if you don’t contradict them, they will talk themselves either into palpable absurdity or into common sense, at any rate into good temper. Therefore, pray don’t interfere to-day with the attacks on your chief. I know Lestrangle will hold his tongue and keep his temper as long as perhaps he ought. I confess I am rather afraid of Leaf and yourself.”

“Why?” I asked, “unless you know what has passed to-day? Leaf and I both agreed rather with Lestrangle’s critics than with himself upon one point, and upon the other you ought to be able to convince the malcontents.”

“They will be silenced, I think,” said Cleveland, “because I shall tell you to cut up my last book in the same style in which the *Courier* cut up Everglade’s speech. But it is just where you don’t agree with your chief that men like you and Leaf are likely to support him somewhat hotly.”

"Is Mrs. Cleveland with you?" I asked.
"Then—may I call on her this evening?"

"You will see her at the office, I think," said Cleveland. "We met Lady Glynne, Sir Ethert's mother-in-law, at Everglade Park a month ago; and something she said, or did not say, has rendered Ida very anxious to see Lestrangle. The friendship between them has always amused and a little perplexed me; what is the foundation of their mutual sympathy even I, who know both so well, can hardly guess. But Ida is the only woman for whom Lestrangle softens and almost suppresses his bitter misogynism, before whom he never speaks contemptuously of the religion he not merely disbelieves but hates; and he is the only man who could carry cynicism half so far without shocking, if not offending her."

"I thought," I said, "Lestrangle was rather a favourite with the ladies?"

"Those who don't know him," answered Cleveland, "with whom he is not sufficiently intimate to be cynical. Always at first they think he likes their society; and there is a certain vein of chivalry about him which is in

curious contrast to his real opinions, if not to his feeling. But no man is so hated by the whole of the shrieking sisterhood, and no man has said more stinging and bitter things about them—the phrase ‘public women’ was his invention. And moreover, Lestrangle, as a rule, is contemptuous and sarcastic towards women in exact proportion to their intelligence. I suppose he thinks that having no souls—as Mahomet did *not* say—they have no right to minds either.”

Only some half a dozen of our staff assembled in the council-room, and of these Sir Ethert Glynne was not one. Of the proprietors four were present: Lord Everglade, a late Cabinet minister, Sir Philip Vere, a man of great weight in the House, who had repeatedly refused office, Cleveland himself, and Lord Penrith. The last, like Lord Everglade, had held high office in the late Government; and like Cleveland, had in early life, while as yet a younger son, served his apprenticeship in journalism. At Cleveland’s suggestion Lord Penrith took the chair. Lestrangle sat on his left, Leaf and myself beside him; Vere and Lord

Everglade immediately on the right of the chair, and Cleveland next them.

"I would ask," said Leaf, after a few introductory words from Lord Penrith, which meant as little as a Queen's speech, "whether we are here to receive orders or to take counsel?"

"I should have thought you knew," returned Cleveland, rather sharply. "If the proprietary had orders to give, they would be given to your chief, and to him alone."

"And," said Lord Penrith, "I think it has been understood from the outset that the possible wishes of the proprietary should, in the first instance at least, be communicated through Mr. Cleveland. But I think, and I hope my partners agree with me, that anything like a separate resolve of the proprietary should as far as possible be avoided. What we wish is that the views of all parties should be freely interchanged and understood. In that way probably any difference may be either avoided, or at least explained and accepted; whereas, if our views are once formulated in a vote, there is less room for mutual accommodation afterwards. I have ever found small bodies or

boards work best where a vote was as far as possible avoided. And, to begin with, I must express on my own behalf, and that of the proprietors generally, the thorough satisfaction we feel with the general management of the *Courier*. Its success, the power and attention it has already acquired, is far greater than we could have expected; and if it has cost more than we altogether anticipated, I believe we are all inclined to think that the Editor has given abundant proof of his fitness to judge what is and what is not worth the outlay it requires."

"Certainly," said Lord Everglade, with an emphasis so marked that I saw a cloud come over the face of Leaf, the only one among us who knew him intimately. I interpreted that cloud to mean—"By the emphasis of his assent where he must approve, we may measure the force of his indignation on the personal question. It is the justice or the courtesy of an enemy."

"I am not surprised," said Veré. "I expected from Mr. Lestrangle exactly what we have received—thoroughly good work, abundant cleverness, telling hits, and—in their aim a

certain want of discrimination between friend and foe."

"Considering," observed Lord Everglade, after a pause, seeing that Lestrangle made no other reply than a bow of acknowledgment—"considering that there is but one thoroughly Tory journal in London, and considering how we have been treated by those opposed to us, I think we at least might have expected defence rather than ridicule from our own organ."

"Lord Everglade," rejoined Leaf, "there are among the proprietors present two who are journalists as well as politicians; one equally eminent in both vocations. I will ask Lord Penrith and Mr. Cleveland whether independence, visible and even ostentatious, be not the first necessity of effective party journalism?—whether we can defend or help you to any purpose till we have proved that we are free to criticise?"

"I agree with you cordially," said Lord Penrith, "but I am not surprised that my colleagues feel somewhat differently; and I do think that ridicule or contempt is not the fitting way of marking independence in the case of eminent members of the party."

“There,” interposed Leaf, “I must take blame to myself. I——”

Lestrangle laid a hand upon his shoulder.

“I decline to allow any of my staff, even my second in command, to accept the shadow of responsibility for anything I have allowed to pass.”

“It may, however,” continued Lord Penrith, “be of service, prevent feelings of personal irritation, to let Lord Everglade particularly understand how these things are done. I will venture to conjecture, though I will not ask anyone to confirm or correct me, that the article on Lord Everglade’s speech was written by one who profoundly understood Continental politics, one so thoroughly master of that subject that an Editor might well flinch from modifying seriously anything he had written.”

“I must say,” replied Lord Everglade, “that though I can understand the necessity, should never dream of denying the right of independent criticism in the journal with which I am connected, I should have expected to receive more of personal courtesy.”

“Then, Lord Everglade,” said Leaf, “in spite

of my chief's prohibition, I must speak. You will hardly think that I intended personal discourtesy to my first and firmest political patron; and the article to which you object was mine, and the sentences in question were, I think, somewhat softened by the Editor."

Lord Everglade's face, hitherto rather stern, and marking a sense of personal displeasure which had seemed to me to threaten serious difficulty, relaxed at this confession.

"I shall remember that the next time you ask me for information or assistance," he said, with a half smile. "Mr. Lestrangle, I owe you an apology, and I make it frankly. I thought myself indebted to you personally for a criticism which perhaps I felt more than an experienced politician ought to have done. You will believe after this that I am in no wise actuated by any personal feeling when I express my regret that the *Courier* has pursued a course different from that recommended by our leader, and likely to be followed by the party in both Houses."

"There," replied Sir Philip, "I must say I agree with the *Courier* rather than with our leader. Seeing that we shall be beaten in any case, that

the Prime Minister is, at least for the present, an absolute dictator, that none of his followers dare call their souls or seats their own, even in Committee, I should have preferred to offer a sturdy and what the Ministerial organs call a sullen resistance."

"I differ with you," rejoined Lord Penrith. "We must try to render their measures as little mischievous as possible, since pass they will; and if you cannot carry an amendment in your House, you may show such reason, such strength in its favour, as may enable *us* to insert and insist upon it. There is another thing that I would note. On questions merely political, I think contemptuous ridicule often a most effective weapon. But more than one of the great questions of this year have been religious or politico-religious. They enlist very strong feeling, no doubt, on both sides. Earnest hostility, even vituperation, however fiercely resented at the time, would soon be forgotten by opponents, and might gratify friends. But I was sorry to see feelings which, just or not, are so deep and so natural, treated with such profound contempt—a contempt which has, as

you will have observed, been called, both in the House of Commons and in the press, ‘insolent.’ I don’t think it pleases the best of our own men, it provokes bitter feeling out of doors, when this paper—which will soon be recognised as the especial organ of the Opposition—writes of Nonconformists in true Moslem tone; evidently thinks, if it do not say, ‘those dogs of Dissenters.’ Even to Churchmen it suggests the lofty superiority of self-satisfied unbelief rather than earnest Churchmanship. In such matters ridicule stings and rankles venomously.”

Most of us who knew the truth could not refrain from a smile. Leaf was for once embarrassed, but Lestrangle preserved his gravity admirably.

“I can promise to change the hand,” he said; “but, as matter of fact, the articles in question were written by a zealous Churchman—one of the few sincerely orthodox Christians to be found, I believe, in the ranks of our profession.”

This second hit thoroughly discomfited those who had come prepared to censure, and the

debate passed on to the general question as to the nature of the opposition to be offered to Ministerial measures—hard resistance or practical criticism. Cleveland, as well as both the ex-ministers, declared strongly in favour of the latter; and Lestrangle, who knew that the same opinion prevailed among his staff, yielded at last in a few words with marked grace and dignity. Then the council broke up, much more amicably than any of us had at first anticipated, after the thanks of the proprietary had been formally offered by Lord Penrith, and warmly endorsed by all his colleagues. As the party dispersed, I observed that Cleveland had first left us. I was alone with Lestrangle by the time he returned, leading his wife.

“Lestrangle, Mrs. Cleveland wants you to show her the office; and then perhaps you can give her lunch. I have business in the City, but hope to return for her in the course of an hour or so.”

After escorting Mrs. Cleveland throughout the offices—from the advertising and book-keeping departments to the composing-room, and the great basement space where the actual

printing was performed by three huge machines, which, each supplied with paper by a single boy, printed and folded automatically some fifty thousand copies per hour—Lestrangle led her to his own outer sitting-room, wherein most of his immediate work was done, through that in which I still remained.

“You will join us?” he said to me.

“No,” interposed Mrs. Cleveland. “I know you will not be offended:—I want to talk to Mr. Lestrangle. Excuse me; I will join you in one minute” (to him); then to me, as we were left alone, in a low voice, “You have seen Sir Ethert Glynne’s wife? What do you think of her?”

“A very charming, very simple, thoroughly girlish creature; rather shy, and I should say depressed and nervous in company. But Lestrangle, who has been greatly taken with her, has seen more of her than I.”

She put, as I afterwards learnt, much the same question to my chief, and his partiality was even more warmly expressed.

“Why does Sir Ethert persist in a career which can have few attractions for him—which

must be, I presume, most laborious, and without reward, except in money, which he cannot want?"

"If I knew, Mrs. Cleveland, of course I could not tell you. As I know nothing, I may be permitted to tell it. Glynne's temper is, like my own, intensely contradictory. He cannot tell the world that he did not marry for money. I don't know that he would care to tell his friends; but I fancy he chooses to repeat it to himself in the most emphatic manner."

"Or to her?"

"I don't know; it may be so."

"Why? Is she capable of suspecting him already?"

"I should have said—no," Lestrangle answered. "I should think her simply perfect; all that a man could desire in—a slave. But unless she is an admirable actress, unless she is at home a troublesome and rebellious slave, I don't know why, with a man like Glynne, the cowhide should be in such constant request."

"How much do you mean by that?" Mrs. Cleveland asked, gravely.

"About as much as you will take it to mean

from me, Mrs. Cleveland. I should have said it to no one else, not even to your husband, and you would have understood it differently if any other man had said it."

"There is a secret, of course?" she observed, reflectively.

Lestrangle's face grew grave at once, and he made no answer. She repeated her question, and seemed to consider his persistent silence the best possible reply.

"And you know it?" she said.

"Yes, Mrs. Cleveland," he replied at last. "But Glynne is not aware that I know, and I can hardly tell him. I will tell you what I should not dare to say to any other. I know it through an accident that may at any time recur, for the secret is in the keeping of a vindictive scoundrel."

Cleveland did not appear at the time appointed, and after waiting some minutes his wife resolved to return home alone. Ethert met her as she was leaving the office, and at her request escorted her to her carriage; which could not approach the door by which she had entered, but remained some score or two of

yards away, where a foot-passage from the the back of our offices opened upon a principal street.

“You will call on Lady Glynne, will you not, Mrs. Cleveland?” he asked, after a few words of course had been interchanged in a tone somewhat graver or more distant than had usually characterised their friendship.

“I am afraid, Sir Ethert, you have made that almost impossible,” she replied.

“What *do* you mean, Mrs. Cleveland?”

“I might have fancied,” she said, gravely, “that you were only taking a somewhat perverse way to disprove the suspicion that your marriage had been one of interest. But the eagerness of her parents satisfied from the first all who knew the facts, and your conduct has of course no tendency to undeceive strangers, even if you cared to do so. What your friends are forced to observe is, that you think it right to mark very distinctly and openly dissatisfaction or resentment. I could hardly be civil, and no more, to Lady Glynne; I cannot become intimate with a lady who, truly or not, appears to be so condemned by her husband and the head of her family.”

"Lady Glynne is simply faultless," he answered, almost indignantly.

"You are bound to say so, and therefore such words cannot be weighed against your own conduct. I am forced to know, perhaps before the world has realised it, that you will not reside at the family seat, you will not touch the fortune you have received with her, and you think it right to make this clear to us all."

"You misunderstand me altogether, Mrs. Cleveland; and are thoroughly unjust to her."

"I cannot help it. And, Sir Ethert, as your own and your mother's friend, I will tell you another thing which it may concern you to know. That a family secret was involved, no one, least of all a lady, could well doubt. What that secret is I neither know nor wish to know. But it *is* known to others, and may any day be made public."

"It would be indeed a friend's part to tell me that," he answered, much startled. "But, Mrs. Cleveland, are you sure?"

"Absolutely sure. What, do you think it strange that this should reach you from a lady's lips? Do you not see that men will not betray

a knowledge which might render their relations with you strained or awkward? Sir Ethert, I guessed what may have made your marriage doubly trying. No one who knew you so well, and had read your books by the light of that knowledge, could well doubt what your fancy for the future was; for whom you chose to achieve a competence in such uncongenial labour. But for that reason, as for others, permit a friend to tell you that you have need to be careful, if you do not wish the world to believe the very worst that may be said, not of yourself, but of the lady of whose reputation, I am sure, whatever your personal feeling, you will be more jealous than of your own."

It was no slight effort of courage and resolve for any lady, especially one some years younger than himself, to speak so plainly, so directly to a man like Ethert Glynne; and Mrs. Cleveland probably felt the awkwardness, and what might have been the impropriety, of the interference as much as any woman could have done. But her feminine instinct had read between the lines of Ethert's character and conduct what had puzzled men better informed

of the facts than herself. She was sure that his home relations could not but be strained, if not unhappy, while he maintained such an attitude before the world; and, interested in him, probably more interested in his young wife, whom she had seen so lately as a child, she was determined to indicate to him—as no one else could, or at any rate would have done—the danger and injustice of the course he was bent on pursuing. And Ethert had the sense not to resent from her what he would hardly have borne from any other living friend of either sex.

“I hope,” he said, as he placed her in her carriage, “you will reconsider your resolve, and call upon my wife. I give you my word, Mrs. Cleveland, you will never have occasion, even from your unusually severe standpoint, to think that you have made a mistake. You may greatly regret hereafter having passed what will look like a slight upon her. And,” he added, in a lower tone, “however kindly your warning now has been intended, I cannot own a friend who refuses to be hers.”

CHAPTER IX.

HOME.

IT was in no pleasant mood that Ethert returned to the office, and took up the preliminary work of the evening. We were accustomed to the snappishness of our hard-worked and hurried sub-editor, who had all a cook's prescriptive right to be ill-tempered. But the rest of us were not given to exhibitions of irritability, and Glynne was one of the gentlest among us. To-night, however, he was so much inclined to quarrel with himself that it would have been a relief to fix a quarrel on some one else. I was reminded of the secret, known but to two of us, by Lestrangle's quiet smile at an unusually tart reply to a necessary question; and felt no inclination to be angry when his assistant almost flung the

Parliamentary Orders at my own head. Even on the exceptionally interesting debate of that night Ethert could hardly fix his attention. Mrs. Cleveland's warning had startled him not a little, and, the more he considered what she had said, the deeper did its significance appear.

It was in truth more opportune than the speaker herself could possibly be aware. Her interpretation of his conduct came in forcible and timely confirmation of Ivy's earnest though gently-worded remonstrance; proving that his refusal to accept the natural and palpable advantages of his marriage had attracted notice, had suggested the very inference which, on his wife's part, had seemed a mere alarm of overstrained sensibility. Alienation or aversion was apparent to the keen insight of women, if not to the slower apprehension or less generous interest of men. Clearly he had no right, from whatever personal motive, to expose Ivy to the wrong and mortification of such misconstruction. To say that she had been faultless was but a cold, imperfect expression of the truth. No sacrifice of pride or consistency that might be necessary to her peace of mind, to the protec-

tion of their domestic secrets, was more than her patient loyalty had deserved and demanded ; and if the betrayal of the original secret had occurred in the most obvious manner, through the greed or malice of its disappointed depository, its complete publication was always possible, was too probably a question of time. He might repent having followed Mr. Brand's advice, and resisted the extortionate claim of a malicious scoundrel ; but it was now too late to raise the offered and evidently inadequate bribe.

It might happen, then, at any moment that the secret, to protect which Ivy had been sacrificed, would be made public, and it could not then be long unknown to her. He could not endure to contemplate the effect on her sensitive spirit. When it became a question, not of public scandal attaching to his aunt, but of personal shame brought home to his bride, staining her unsullied innocence of mind, her snowy chastity of nature, he was quite as much disturbed and terrified as Lady Glynne herself had been, if not so utterly distracted and bewildered by fear. And Ivy must learn not only that her name was dishonoured, but

that her happiness had been sacrificed in vain.

No!—the thought flashed across his mind with a sudden thrill of satisfaction—not wholly in vain! His own sacrifice had at least purchased the right and the power to protect her from public affront, if not from personal humiliation. The name she bore was now hers by a title that no disclosure could invalidate; her inheritance, if lost to Sir Charles's daughter, was secured to the wife of his successor. The mistress of Glynnehurst held, in his right, if not in her own, a social position that even illegitimacy would not permanently affect. And—once again, and stronger still, came that thrill of satisfaction, and almost of delight—the danger of such a revelation changed at once her interest and his duty. While the world believed her, while she could remain in effect the heiress of a splendid fortune, her marriage was a hardship, if not a wrong; when her name and inheritance were in peril, it became what it had been in intention and to his knowledge from the first, her security and her guarantee. She would have need of all the consolation, all the shelter, all the sense of comfort and support

that a husband's love and tenderness, as well as a husband's name, could afford.

Now for the first time Ethert felt that, once needed, that love could be given without effort and without stint; that, the barrier of pride and resentment once removed, he loved his portionless bride, his nameless, fatherless cousin, as he had never dreamed of loving any visionary or embodied ideal; that, till now, he had never known what love could and should be. He loved indeed too dearly, too devoutly, to desire the satisfaction of his love. He could better bear, even now, that his heart should be broken over a final parting than that the maiden whiteness of her soul should be soiled by the knowledge of the truth, though that knowledge alone could vindicate the unselfishness of his affection; even now he would not declare a love that was not so proven. He could not bear the thought either of her probable humiliation or of her possible distrust. She must not know the shadow of shame, nor must he be able to doubt that she could doubt him. That her love had endured through the sorest trial, that her trust in his truth could no more

fail than his belief in her purity, did not even yet occur to him.

It was in some sense unfortunate that he did not meet Ivy while the emotions excited by the partial revelation of his secret, by the first consciousness of his real feeling towards her, and by the confirmation of her fears afforded through Mrs. Cleveland's rebuke, were still fresh. Ere morning he had recovered the self-control they had overthrown; he was still resolute not to seem to profit by his marriage, to take no step that could tend to fetter Ivy's future freedom, while he could still hope that the revelation of the truth might be confined to those whose silence could be trusted or purchased. The night's reflection had shown him from whom Mrs. Cleveland must have acquired her limited information. It was, he thought, quite in keeping with Lestrangle's character to take this means of conveying the kindly warning, while avoiding the indelicacy of forcing his friend's confidence; and he knew how close and intimate were Lestrangle's relations, both with Mrs. Cleveland and her husband. He meant to see that day the three persons who must know

most of the truth—the lady herself, her probable informant, and Mr. Brand. But on the breakfast-table he found letters that imperatively demanded an immediate decision on their contents, and a decision that could hardly fail to affect more or less directly the paramount and pressing question of his life.

The first announced the intention of the Lord-Lieutenant of the county to recommend the owner of Glynnehurst for the magistracy; and Ethert knew that the bench of that district much needed to be strengthened even in ordinary times. A report from Mr. Lawson informed him that the industrial disturbances, which had for some time given much trouble in Stapleton, had extended to the mines in which, through his bride, he was largely concerned. And finally, a letter from Mr. Verner advised him that the strike at the latter's factory, and others of less importance in the town, had assumed a grave aspect, and threatened riots whose ultimate consequences none could pretend to calculate.

It was clear that he must go to Glynnehurst, and at once. To leave matters in Mr. Lawson's

hands was, as he perfectly understood, to identify himself with the Masters' Association, and to fight out the battle on their lines; whereas Ethert's convictions and feelings alike determined him to deal with his own people in his own way. Resolute to treat the chiefs of the Trades Union as impertinent intermeddlers, disposed at any cost to put an instant and pointed slight upon them, and aware that this was an opportunity which could not recur—holding it a plain duty to his cousin to protect her property and conciliate her tenantry,—he must take the helm in person; and, if he meant to act, it was probably desirable that he should be armed with the authority of the magistracy. Yet he was most unwilling to depart, under no necessity that Ivy could appreciate, from the principle on which he had acted in regard to the representation of Stapleton; most averse to treat her property as giving him any qualification for public position, or any personal interest in local affairs. She could not of course understand the apprehension that made him loth to repeat that practical disclaimer at a moment when the real state of the case might so soon

be publicly known. Would it not be inferred from his attitude that he had not known the truth, that in his marriage he had been a dupe, even if Ivy had been guiltless of the deception? Again, in regard to the whole case, she ought to be consulted; and yet the conversation was almost as certain to give her pain in one aspect as to frighten her in another. True, there was no actual necessity for explanation, still less for debate. If Ivy were simply told that his presence was required at Glynnehurst, and that she must be ready to start at a fixed hour, she would ask no questions, would show no resentment. On the contrary, Ethert suspected, and not without cause, that such a peremptory command would have been more welcome than the carefully deferential requests which tacitly disclaimed the right to expect compliance as of course. Both perhaps felt that the obedience so willingly promised, so studiously left in abeyance, belonged to the relation whose formal duties the young bride was the more watchful to fulfil that these alone were within her power.

Ethert was unusually silent during the morn-

ing meal, answering Meta's lively talk or eager questions so briefly, so absently that Ivy was at first surprised and afterwards almost annoyed by the young girl's unconscious persistence. At last, ever apprehensive of a displeasure she had never actually encountered, she became convinced that her husband was angry, and of course angry with her. She could hardly fear to be scolded; she did dread, though half reproaching herself for an apprehension that had never been justified, to receive one of the sharp stinging phrases that had now and then supported her own authority against Meta's petulance or a servant's neglect, but always frightened her almost into tears; yet dreaded most of all to be left as usual in absolute ignorance how or whether she was to blame. Her suspense and alarm constantly increased, till the servant had left the room and Meta had been summoned to her lessons; then, assured by his unusual loitering that he meant to speak, and to speak to her alone, her nervous dismay became so uncontrollable that Ethert's first glance must detect it.

"Ivy," he began—looked up from the papers

in his hand, and paused in surprise. "Come here, child. What *is* the matter? Sit down," placing her favourite low chair beside his own, "I wanted to talk to you; but, if you are in any trouble, let me hear your story first. Surely, whatever may have happened—if all your servants had given notice together, or if Miss Compton and Meta have quarrelled again—it could not be worth so much distress."

There was such evident kindness in his tone, and so much of sympathy mixed with his amusement at the anticipated exaggeration of some terrific trifle, that Ivy was almost reassured.

"Indeed there is nothing, Ethert—if only—you are sure you are not angry, not displeased with me?"

The smile faded at once from his face. Her constant extravagant fear of him—fear as it seemed of harshness she had never suffered—appeared to him a severe, an almost wholly undeserved reproach. When most uncomfortable, most impatient of the situation, most irritable with others, he had never given her a rough word; and yet she trembled before him like a

child expecting instant punishment for faults she knew not how to avoid.

“Once for all, Ivy, you might dismiss that fear from your mind. You have never done anything that should make any rational being vexed with you, and you *could* do nothing that would give me the right to be angry.”

“Ethert, how can I be at ease while you say that? It means that, however angry I may make you, you will not tell me—you will neither forgive me nor set me right. What have I done now? Do tell me?”

He could not suppress a smile, so ludicrously misplaced was the pathos of her entreaty.

“Everything you could, Ivy—to make me wish I could forget that my bride was neither wooed nor won. Angry? When we part, I shall have to say, like Louis XIV., ‘It is the first time she ever vexed me.’”

Missing the only point that could have given her pain, entertaining no idea of any separation but the last and least cruel, Ivy was comforted and encouraged beyond expression. The dark, soft eyes were moist but brilliant as she lifted them to his; and by a sudden impulse—as

suddenly checked, not by resentment but by timidity—her hand touched that which rested within its reach on the arm of his chair. He felt the touch with a thrill that reached his inmost soul; but she only saw the kind of irrepressible quiver it excited, and shrank into herself with a sadness that was not comforted even by the earnest, cordial, grateful clasp which, but half a second too late, had answered hers.

“ Well then, Ivy, if you have nothing to say, I must speak to you; and I am afraid I must ask you for a rather hurried decision. Perhaps it will make amends that my proposal is almost that for which you were so wishful the other day. You will see from these letters that, as your representative, my presence is required at Glynnehurst. I am afraid I must go, and at once; will you choose to accompany me? Don’t exaggerate the trouble,” he added, still withholding the letters he was about to place in her hand; “ this sort of thing happens everywhere from time to time, and no harm need come of it; only the representative of a property so much affected ought to be on the spot, and

it may be some time before, once there, I can return to London."

"There is no reason, I suppose," she said, in a low, hesitating tone, without glancing at the letters, though they were already in her hand, "why you should take me unless you choose? Ethert, you know I should wish—it would be a great pleasure to me, but you must not misunderstand me again. You know I have nothing, I will have nothing to do, except what you tell me I must, with business or with Glynnehurst; but if you are going, and above all if there is danger, you know it would not be kind to leave me."

"There is nothing worth calling danger, Ivy; and certainly I should be sorry to leave you, if you can be ready in time. But read, and then decide for yourself; only I must try to see Le-strange at once, and explain to him, and then we ought to lose no time in going."

"Before you go down to the office, then, Ethert, say whether you will take us, and I promise to be ready as soon as yourself. Of course we must take Meta—and—you will not mind her having a holiday now? And—might

it not be—— Do you remember what you said about Miss Compton?”

“It might be an opportunity, certainly, to terminate her engagement civilly and satisfactorily—to Meta’s satisfaction assuredly, and probably to your own. In truth, Ivy, I know nothing; I cannot tell how long we may be kept there, and that vexes me much, since——”

He paused; she had opened the letters at last, and he was glad to postpone any discussion of a point upon which he foresaw what his determination must be. What he had refused to yield to her entreaties and to Le-strange’s advice was forced upon him now. The resignation of his post on the *Courier* would be inevitable, in view of an indefinite detention at Glynnehurst; and yet perhaps at heart he was but half sorry to be forced to a step to which there was but one sentimental objection, and which was on so many grounds desirable in itself.

“Riot!” Ivy exclaimed, much dismayed and agitated by her perusal of the letters. “But, Ethert, you have nothing to do with that; that is Mr. Verner’s affair—you will not meddle with it?”

“I could not help it, Ivy. The whole question is intermixed. The strike there has connections with the trouble at the mines; and moreover, it does concern—us, even as owners of property in Stapleton; much more because if there should be riot there it is likely to extend to the miners, now that they have turned out. I am afraid Mr. Lawson has made a mistake—no, that is not fair; but he has not acted as I should have done—should have been disposed to do—had I been on the spot. And again, Ivy, look at this official letter. I suppose I must tell you, it is usual to make all considerable landowners magistrates in their own district; and the Lord-Lieutenant has written that he intends to recommend me to Her Majesty as a Justice of the Peace for ——shire, as if Glynnehurst were——”

“Ethert, if you will say that to me, surely you will not say it again to others? I asked you to think—have you not thought? can you say it is not true that, when you tell people by your conduct, if not in words, that you will not speak or act as the owner of what you call your wife’s property, you show that you are not

friends with her? Is it not so, Ethert?" as he remained silent.

"I suppose it would be so, Ivy, if I were to refuse Lord ——'s offer; and perhaps that would be carrying independence further than there is any need. I can hardly do justice to —our interests, if I am not a magistrate in times like these."

"Then, Ethert, you will thank Lord ——, and say nothing about And—you see how you are wanted there—will you not give up what you cannot attend to without neglecting the property? You say yourself things would have gone differently, if——" She could not bear to utter a reproach of which, till it was half spoken, she had been quite unconscious. She had never meant to remind Ethert that, from his own point of view, the present trouble was partly due to his obstinate neglect of duties which, had he been acting merely as her guardian, he certainly could not have thought himself entitled to ignore.

"I am afraid I must, Ivy. As I said, I can have no idea how long this business may require our presence there; but, remember, I can

at any time return, can always find work here. You must not think that—that you owe me anything—that Glynnehurst is less exclusively yours because, at a time like this, I am forced to give up any other engagement to attend to it.”

“Ethert, you let me understand once that you would think it really yours if—after my death. Would you have me think—not that you wish for that; I am sure you don’t—but how much better it would be for you?”

“God forbid!” he exclaimed, startled into an expression of feeling whose sincerity was evident, even to her, in tone and look. It was after half a minute’s silence that he was able to continue, with apparent levity. “Do you think all the wealth of England could ever have reconciled me to part with my favourite cousin? And now—well, will you go down with me? We ought to go to-day, and we must go to-morrow.”

“I will be ready this afternoon, Ethert, if you will allow—if you are not unwilling that I should go with you. Only you will not think that it is because—that I mean to have anything to do with——”

“I shall not think, Ivy, that you mean to do anything but what is kind and right—what you think your duty to me. Thank you; I am glad to think the question is settled for us, and settled as you wish. We shall be ‘at home,’ then, to-night. I hope you will enjoy the change, the return as much as you expected—as much as I shall.”

It would not be easy to describe Meta's delight when summoned from her lessons to prepare for a wholly unexpected and doubly delightful holiday. London was almost as hateful to her as to Ethert, almost as dreary as to Ivy; and her release from a companionship, a control daily more irksome—though, for Ivy's sake, she had so restrained her temper that no further collision with her governess had occurred—was the more pleasant because so wholly unlooked for. Pleased with the first glimpse of the country in its summer dress, pleased to compare each passing scene with those Northern landscapes wherewith she was more familiar, her delight culminated when the carriage which met them at the station, passing through the park-gates, brought them in

full view of the beautiful scenery and fine antique residence.

Meta's pleasure either infected Ivy, or through her ever ready unselfish sympathy with others led her thoughts away from the less agreeable associations of this return to her home. She could smile frankly and kindly at her companion's eager expressions of childish glee, could answer cheerfully the look of welcome on the few familiar faces they passed, the greetings of the tenantry and labourers about the park. But her countenance had grown grave and almost sad before they reached the door, and Ethert sprang out to hand her from her carriage. He had watched for the last few minutes the changing expression of her face, trying to read there the cause or character of such nervous apprehensions as she had that morning betrayed. The last cloud that passed over it recalled him to a recollection of her probable frame of mind, to the sense of what was due to her on an occasion with which too possibly so many painful feelings and still more painful fears were associated. She would have paused to bring Meta forward with her, but

Ethert, never before neglectful of their orphan *protégée*, felt justly enough that *her* feelings were at present matter of comparatively slight importance. Many of the household were assembled in the hall to receive their young mistress on her first return to the home she had left under such strange, ill-omened circumstances as a bride. It must be his sole care that, before them at least, nothing should be wanting to mark her husband's full and cordial sympathy; to give every possible appearance of cheerfulness, of content, if of a certain subdued feeling, to the first occasion on which they entered as their own the seat of their forefathers, the home of her youth and childhood. So, drawing Ivy's hand within his arm, he led her up the steps and into the hall, leaving it to the ancient butler and major-domo to hand Meta from the carriage. The latter would not be easily hurt by a trivial neglect of formal attention, and, if she were, her mortification would be easily and speedily relieved. For the moment he must have thought and eyes only for his wife.

"Welcome home, Ivy!" he said earnestly, as,

for the first time, she entered that home as its mistress.

Sensitive as ever to his every word, to every inflection of his voice and every change in his manner, Ivy felt, understood all of kindness, of sympathy that was intended, all that look and tone could throw into the brief sentence ; though one which could hardly in common courtesy have been omitted, yet one which to her ear and heart spoke all that at the moment words could have said. The cloud had vanished from her face, her smile had no trace of sadness which those around could detect, as she answered hastily but kindly the greetings of her household, and then turned to welcome Meta with an earnest and affectionate embrace.

“I am so glad to bring you here, dearest. If it is not as pretty as your old home, I hope we may make you as happy here ; and at any rate it will be a pleasant change from London.”

CHAPTER X.

HAILSTONES.

“ **A**S you please, Meta. As Ivy says nothing, I suppose I have no right to say more—whatever I may think. Ivy, you will have the day to yourself, I fear. If you like to drive out, you might call on the Vavasours; but on no account come near Stapleton or the mines. I suppose I am pretty sure to be back for dinner; but if not, I cannot tell how long I shall be detained, so you must not wait or be alarmed.”

Ethert's horse stood, held by a groom, at the hall door, and Ivy, roused from a reverie by his hasty departure, hurried to the window of the breakfast-room just in time to catch another glimpse of his figure as he started—alone. At another time she would not have noticed this,

little accustomed to any mere affectation of state or formality; but now, wishing for safety's sake that a servant had attended Ethert, she was reminded of the kind of humour that might have induced him to refuse such attendance from the household he would not acknowledge as his own. Looking after him anxiously, she had almost sunk into another dreamy mood, from which she was, however, quickly awakened by Meta's half-amused, half-indignant tone.

"Ethert"—she had learnt, since her school-room scrape had established a cordial understanding with Ivy, to resume the old familiar address towards both—"Ethert is always cross now, and he never used to be. This morning, if you had not been here, Ivy, and he had not made it such a point that I am your charge, and not his, I should have caught it."

Ivy was in a humour in which even this kind of thoughtless, unintentional slight or disrespect to her husband, in her presence, could hardly fail to rouse as much displeasure as her gentle temper was capable of manifesting.

"I understand, then; and no wonder he was displeased with me if he expected me to inter-

fere; but I did not hear what passed. Meta, I am sure you deserved it, then; and it is time I should remind you in some fashion, if he will not, to whom you speak."

She meant, of course, "that you speak of Ethert to Ethert's wife." But Meta, already half offended and somewhat wounded by Ethert's irritability—not aware like Ivy how much, how entirely as regarded herself, his impatience was due to chronic vexation of spirit and physical discomfort—was not in a frame of mind to interpret a phrase apparently harsh by the recollection of her friend's uniform gentleness and consideration.

"It was your own doing if I ever forgot it, Lady Glynne. You shall not have occasion to remind me again."

"What is the matter?" Ivy said, startled, not exactly remembering the words she had used, but perfectly aware that there had been nothing in her meaning that even Meta could well resent. But Meta had hastily left the room. She did not re-appear till directly invited to join Ivy in her drive; for, restless at home in her vague anxiety and apprehension for Ethert's

safety, over-rating of course a danger she could not understand, Ivy had snatched at the only diversion of thought within her reach. Meta chose, however, to take the invitation as a command, in the same spirit in which she had almost persuaded herself by this time that Ivy's hasty reproof had implied something like menace, as well as a rough, ungenerous assertion of superiority. Persistent silence and the formality of her few words marked, in a manner very painful to the elder girl, the offence that had been given by a sentence Ivy endeavoured in vain to recall. Could she have remembered, she would not have hesitated to explain or apologise for it; but as all she could recollect was her intention to remind Meta at once of the respect due to her guardian, and the impropriety of complaint against him addressed to his wife, she felt compelled to endure in silence the sullenness she was unconscious of deserving, and only hoped by degrees to dissipate.

It was perhaps this sullenness that, making their *tête-à-tête* so irksome, overcame Ivy's dread of a formal call on formal neighbours. Even a visit at Vavasour Hall might break the

intolerable monotony of a drive with a companion who would only answer when spoken to, and then chiefly in monosyllables. The threatening attitude of the lower classes of Stapleton and its neighbourhood, and the strike in the mines, in one of which Mr. Vavasour was interested, were the chief subjects of conversation among the ladies; and before she left, Ivy's fears, already exaggerated, had been intensified to a degree that rendered her scarcely able to control her agitation. This Meta observed, and the distress of one from whom she had never received anything but studied tenderness and indulgence appealed to her good feeling and good sense too strongly not to overcome the ill-temper of which Ivy's forbearance had already rendered her half ashamed. It was with the hesitation of repentant timidity, rather than of imperfectly vanquished ill-humour, that she laid her hand on Ivy's when they were once more in the carriage; and, answered by a kindly pressure and an enquiring glance from those soft eyes, her reserve broke down altogether.

"You were quite right, Ivy; and, if it was not quite so kind a way of saying it as usual, it

was only because you have always been so kind that I was foolish enough to be hurt."

"I don't remember what I said," Ivy answered, half absently, "but I know I did not mean to hurt you. Only you must not speak in that tone of Ethert—and least of all to me."

"I never thought of that," Meta returned, frankly, "though, of course, that was what you meant, and I ought to have known. But, Ivy, you are frightened more than you will say. I can't fancy that really there is much danger. I heard what they said, and I saw that Miss Vavasour was not half so frightened as her mother, and once or twice tried to check her, thinking she was exaggerating; only, I remember, when you spoke of Ethert being on horseback she seemed a little startled. Will you go round, not by the mines, but by that village she said he would pass through in coming home, and where she thought there might be—something? Then he might leave his horse and come back with us; it would be safer."

"I am afraid he would not be pleased," Ivy said, hesitating between her anxiety to assure herself of her husband's safety, if not to contri-

bute to it, and her nervous terror of offending him.

“But it is not so near the mines, is it? And he did not tell you not to go there: and if he did, throw the blame on me. Nay,” seeing that this suggestion gave pain, not pleasure or comfort, “I dare say he would be more angry with me, but it won’t matter. He will only think me an impertinent child, and if I am well scolded—I have deserved it twice to-day. May I tell them to drive round by Ellington?”

As Ivy did not forbid it, Meta took upon herself to give the order. She half repented before they had reached the village, as they met not a few angry-looking faces on the road, and saw more than one group decidedly the worse for drink as well as excited by heated oratory or mutual discussion of their grievances. The village street as they passed up it seemed more and more crowded, and under the projecting window above the door of the little inn the frightened horses and their almost equally frightened coachman came to a standstill. At this moment Ethert, accompanied by two or three other gentlemen, around whom gathered a

number of farmers, managers, foremen, and other members of the party of order, rode up.

“What *has* brought you here, Ivy?” he asked, more sharply than he was aware, as alarm for her made him forgetful of his usual ceremonious courtesy.

Before she had time to answer, his attention was diverted. The sight of the carriage had drawn the crowd closer. The mounted party and their friends on foot were almost enclosed, and a rough miner had laid hold on the bridle of a nervous hunter, whose rider lifted his whip.

“Don’t strike,” said Ethert, quickly and low. “That is the wildest thing to do in a case like this. The first blow struck may cost bloodshed. My friend,”—to the miner—“you had better let go: that horse bites.”

The hunter was so fidgety under the annoyance that the man, though with a sneer and a blasphemy, thought it prudent to obey the warning, which was altogether an invention of the moment. But some collision had taken place at another point, and in a moment it was evident that serious mischief might be impending.

“Get down, and get into the inn!” Ethert cried, as one or two stones were flung. “Take the carriage into the yard, James. The ladies can get out through the garden at the back, and you must meet them in the lane.”

Before they could obey the counsel, however, the shower of stones aimed at the most unpopular of the horsemen became more serious. None of the pebbles flung were heavy, but more than one was dangerously sharp; and one of the smaller struck Meta on the forehead, cutting the skin, not deeply, but for some distance, just above the eye, and covering her face with blood. The women of the inn rushed forward to draw Lady Glynne and her companion into the comparative security afforded by their door; but before she was lifted from the carriage Meta had seen what dispelled all care for her own injury. Ethert, exasperated by the outrage, and losing at once the control over himself and others he had hitherto exercised, swinging the heavy riding-whip he carried, had dashed at the stone-thrower he had marked; and striking his cap from his head with the handle, had lashed him about the face

and shoulders with the thong, till, breaking the weapon and the man's head in one downright blow, he found himself separated from his friends and alone in the midst of the mob. The rougher sort, enraged by the chastisement inflicted on their companion, and not aware of the provocation, were ready to drag him from his horse, and might probably in their fury have murdered him before they were aware.

Having hurried the ladies up into the room whose window, as we have said, projected above the front door, the landlady was pressing Meta to wash the blood from her face, and held a basin and towel for the purpose. But Meta, much more anxious for her guardian than either frightened or shaken by the wound, hastened to the window and flung it open. The appearance of a lady in the midst of such peril attracted at once the gaze of part of the crowd; the sight of the blood shocked many of those among them who had not wholly lost their senses with passion. These eagerly interposed to stop further stone-throwing; and their change of action and manner, the consciousness of a division among themselves, diverted for a

moment the attention and silenced partially the rage of the crowd. Ethert availed himself of the opportunity to back his horse towards the friends who were already forcing their way to his assistance. With a presence of mind which a woman of twice her years and ten times her experience might have failed to command at the critical moment, Meta seized the opportunity to make her voice heard, for the very few words with which she could hope to reach the ears and understanding of the mob.

“Men, he saw me struck, and he thrashed the man who did it. Would you hurt him for that? Which of you would not have done the same for your own sisters?”

The indignant tone, the feminine courage, more striking to them who knew better than did Meta the real danger she had incurred, the brevity and force of her language, appealed in exactly the right manner and at the right moment to the best feelings of the crowd. They answered with a hearty cheer; and before another change of temper could occur, before another attack could be made by those who had not caught or were not impressed by Meta's

appeal, Ethert's friends had rejoined and formed around him, and he, aware that the pause had afforded at least a chance of a hearing, addressed the populace. Knowing better than Meta why and how the use of the whip had given such mortal offence, knowing that it is the most exasperating and perhaps the most dangerous weapon that can be used against a mob or any of its members, he came to the point at once.

"If," he said, "a Peer of England had struck a woman, one of your own wives, in my presence, I would have thrashed him as I thrashed that fellow. A whip is the only weapon for curs who will hurt women: those that men use against men are not for such cowards as he. If we come to fighting, it won't be with horse-whips. Meantime, will you hear me?"

By this time the owner of Glynnehurst, the head of a family long popular in the district, had been generally recognized; and, what made a still greater impression on the crowd, Meta had brought Ivy forward to the window. She trembled too violently to appeal by speech or even by gesture to their feelings, as Meta had

done; but the presence of the young wife was in itself no small protection to her husband, and it was plain at once that Ethert could command a hearing.

“Now, my friends, let us reason out the matter. If you choose to strike for higher wages or shorter hours, you have a perfect right to do so, and I at least, if I don’t agree with you, shall never quarrel with you or think the worse of you for that. I am sorry that in so doing you take the bread and butter from your children, that in winter you have to sit by fireless hearths. But you must judge for yourselves on that point. But when you talk of wrecking property, of damaging the mines permanently, or of sacking factories, just reflect what you are really doing. It is not Mr. Verner, it is not I who will suffer; the county will have to make good all you destroy; and, as you cannot expect Englishmen to stand quietly by and see their property ravaged, you may be sure that lives will be lost, wives widowed and children orphaned, all to no purpose but pure evil. We shall be paid in full; but it is not so sure that we shall re-open the

mines or re-build the factories you have destroyed. You will probably have ruined yourselves, and done little or no harm to us. Think of this, keep your tempers, and choose men of your own—Ellington men, Stapleton men, not mischief-makers from a distance—and let them come and talk it out with us.”

“They would not hear us, Sir Ethert,” cried a voice from the crowd. “They are too proud to shake our dirty hands, to talk with the men who earn their fortunes.”

“How much would you earn without the machinery we pay for? How many screws to one man could you make with your own hands? How much coal or ironstone could one of you get, or what use would they be, without our shafts and furnaces? You could no more do without us than we without you. And as to being proud, I, at any rate, will always hear what my own people have to say. I have nothing to do with strangers from London, or Manchester, or Birmingham—with Unionists that bully you before they try to use you to bully us.”

“The masters have a Union, Sir Ethert,

and you are one of them. Why should not we?"

"If you like, of course. Only I will not talk to strangers about your affairs. My name was put down as a member of the Masters' Union. I did not authorise it; I have withdrawn it. Their Union may settle with the Union of their men; I will deal face to face with those I employ, with my wife's tenantry, and with nobody else. But this is not the time or place for such a talk. If it is too far to come to me at Glynnehurst, I will meet you at Stapleton to-morrow."

The temper of the crowd had been turned for the moment, but Ethert knew well how likely it was that a popular mob-orator might in five minutes undo, and more than undo, all that he had accomplished. Giving his horse to the son of one of his smaller tenants who happened to be present, he passed into the inn, joined Ivy for a moment at the window, and then hurried her and Meta through the garden to re-enter the carriage that, as he had directed, now waited for them in a back lane, out of sight of the mob.

"It was too dangerous, Ivy. You neither should have come here, nor shown yourself at the window. But you saved me then."

"Not I," Ivy answered, still trembling so that she could hardly speak. "I had no courage; I could not have thought It was Meta who, hurt as she was, first calmed them, and then brought me forward, while I hardly knew where I was."

Ethert's look of thanks, his few words of praise to Meta, were not in the least grudged by Ivy's frank and generous spirit; and would not have been grudged even had not her husband presently turned to her with equal pride, and, she could almost have thought, with at least equal kindness.

"You know how to do justice in the hardest case, Ivy—justice to one who succeeded where you failed. A lady here and there might have equalled Meta; I know no other who, in your place, could have praised her. Besides, much as Meta's courage pleased them, much as she did for me, it was your presence, your name that ensured me a hearing, and stopped the pelting. They might possibly have killed

Meta's champion under her eyes—they would not hurt the husband of Sir Charles Glynne's daughter in his wife's presence."

CHAPTER XI.

“RAIN, RAIN AND SUN!”

“**W**HAT on earth do you want with that club, Ethert?”

“Call it a staff, please, Pearl. That is the correct and legal word. After all, it is only the upper end of a heavy walking-stick, which would have been too long and a little too weighty for use.”

“For what use? And what is that strap for? Are you going to have another fight? Oh, Ethert! Ivy *will* be frightened. I am more afraid than I should like her to see.”

They sat together on the terrace, once before mentioned, immediately overlooking the cliff, on which a side window of Ethert's own apartments, formerly his uncle's, opened; and a servant had just brought to his master the weapon

whose formidable appearance had elicited Meta's suspicious questions.

“I will put it away,” he said, “before she has the chance to see it. I dare say there will be a row to-day, and that black patch on your forehead reminds me that I owe some of them a debt I shall not be sorry to pay.”

“They would have murdered you, Ethert, and they may do it yet! Besides, that was an accident, and when they saw what they had done, they were sorry. And I cannot help feeling for them and with them, more than with Mr. Verner and the other gentlemen who were here last night. No doubt it must make you angry to have your property attacked; but it is much harder for them to see their wives and children hungry.”

“That is their own fault, Meta. But it is not the danger to property that makes me angry, though that seems to exasperate some of the manufacturers bitterly. What I will never tolerate, while I can help to put it down, is rebellion, violent resistance to the law and to the Queen's authority. For that I have as little mercy as Lestrangle, who says there is

one only remedy for riot or mob-violence—*mitraille*.”

“Ethert, I don’t think you are quite yourself, or you would hardly say such a thing. That was not the spirit of your speech to the men at Ellington.”

“No, and it is not the spirit in which I am acting. We have cavalry in reserve, and I have got the magistrates to promise that, if they have to act, they shall act effectually. But I have also brought them to agree that the soldiers shall come in only in the last resort—after we have been beaten. We have sworn in four hundred special constables, and they are officered by men who, except myself, have all seen actual service. I think I have kept the miners back; their leaders promised me to keep them out of Stapleton to-day if possible. But there will be a great meeting of the men on strike in the town itself, and our spies tell us they mean to attack Verner’s factory. In that case we must fight. Their first idea was to close the gates, barricade them, and defend the place with fire-arms till the soldiers came up. Now I want to avoid that. If we shed

blood in that way, if half a dozen men are killed in fight with deadly weapons, there will be not only frightful mischief at the time, perhaps a fury that will not give way even before a charge of cavalry—and after all a squadron could do little if the mob stood firm,—but such bitter hatred for years to come as will be worse than the worst present havoc could be. Let us fight it out with the constable’s staff, and, though nearly as much harm may be done and more men hurt, there will not be the same savage feeling on either side when it is over.”

“But, Ethert, you will be frightfully outnumbered. They said there were two thousand of them the other day.”

“Not fifteen hundred, dear child. But they are not disciplined, will not act under orders and together as we shall.”

“Then it will be almost a battle. Oh, Ethert!”

He laughed; but the laugh was suddenly and sharply checked as a light, trembling touch upon his shoulder warned him that the last sentences had fallen into ears for which they certainly were not intended. Ivy had purposely

left the twain alone, having observed how carefully, as she thought, Ethert had avoided in her presence any further expression of thanks or admiration for Meta's courageous interference, and even any indirect recognition thereof in tone or manner. She fancied that he was thus reserved lest she should be hurt by the recollection of her own cowardice, or by the contrast between his natural kindness to his ward and his ceremonious deference to herself. She felt that Meta's service should have been more warmly acknowledged, and her own sensitiveness to coldness or neglect only made her the more anxious to spare another. That Ethert would take occasion to repair all omissions in her absence she took for granted; and in returning she had no idea of listening unobserved. At the same time she was too simple and trustful, too absolutely innocent of suspicion, too utterly free from jealousy to apprehend that anything might pass which she could disapprove or dislike, which either Ethert or Meta could desire to withhold from her except in consideration for herself. If she had known how much more openly Ethert had

spoken to Meta than while she was present, she would have recognized and appreciated with perfect justice, and without an after-thought of distrust or annoyance, his consideration for her weaker nerves or keener anxiety. It never occurred to her that he could wish to be apprised of her approach, or displeased by sudden interruption; she no more dreamed of avoiding to overhear their talk than of trying to surprise it. Thus, returning through one of the rooms not opening like Ethert's on the end of the terrace, but directly facing the cliff, she had approached unobserved and unheard, and had been too much startled by the first words that reached her ear to give other warning of her presence. She regretted this instantly as Ethert started under her touch; fancying in that start the repugnance she had felt or supposed on former occasions, and not the actual surprise and alarm due to the suddenness of her appearance and to instant recollection of the words she must have caught. Pain, therefore, as well as fear and distress, was visible in the agitated face into which he looked up; and, on his part, uneasiness and sympathy for Ivy

deepened and prolonged that disturbance of manner which she misconstrued.

"I beg your pardon, Ethert. Indeed I did not mean—and I would not have touched you, only I was so frightened. I see your horse is at the door, and I have brought you a note; I fancy it is from Mr. Verner, is it not? Oh Ethert! what is the matter?"

"Very little, Ivy, to make so much of. Yes," opening the note. "Well, this only hurries me a little. Meta, will you take the thing you admired so much and leave it for me on the hall table? Good-bye," as she rose, taking the hint intended as much to secure her absence as to keep the weapon he had laid aside in his study out of Ivy's sight. "Don't be foolish yourself, and don't encourage Ivy's fears."

The farewell to Meta, spoken with studied lightness as it was, confirmed and intensified Ivy's alarm.

"Ethert, you are expecting danger! Ah! must you go? Do think—do take care. Think how terrible it would be to me—to us, if . . . Oh Ethert! I wish you would not go!"

"You want me to play the coward, Ivy? I

came here because there was—I cannot say danger, but trouble of this very kind; and there is nothing now to be more afraid of than at Ellington—less, as *you* will not be within reach of danger.”

Ivy mistook his meaning once more, and answered, in a tone through whose submission the pain she felt in the supposed reproach was but too evident,

“I know I am a coward, Ethert; I am afraid I shall always be a coward when there seems to be danger. But, before you go, say you are not angry with me. I did not intend——”

“What do you mean, Ivy? You startled me because I did not know you were near, and, as it happened, I did *not* intend you to hear what I knew would frighten you. Nor should I have told Meta, but that an accident made her aware that we expected, or rather thought it possible, that there might be some disturbance to-day at Stapleton.”

“Ethert, do have pity—do think how dreadful it would be, how cruel to me, if—if anything happened; and now, when you have just shown what you really feel, how you shrink

from me when you are not on your guard!"

His movement of surprise, his look of wonder and almost of horror, were, even to her eyes, evidently sincere and unaffected.

"*That* was your thought, Ivy? What can I say, what am I to do with one who can wrong me and torment herself with such extravagant fancies? You complain that I misconceive you sometimes; I am sure this misunderstanding is far worse, far more cruel than I was ever guilty of. Sit down here," drawing her close beside him, into Meta's vacant seat. "I must spare five minutes to make my peace with you—I cannot leave you to think so unkindly of me even for a few hours, to grieve over such a delusion; and Launval" (his horse) "must make up for it."

"Ethert, I wish you would not ride. Do take the carriage this time. Miss Vavasour thought there was so much more danger on horseback."

"I am not going to ride into the crowd, Ivy; and we shall have a strong force gathered before we enter Stapleton. All those of your tenants who are sworn in are to meet me half

a mile outside the town, and you may trust me in their care.”

“Ethert, if there is danger, I know you will not think of yourself; and you will be the first if it comes to blows.”

“I hope so. But, Ivy, do not let us part even for a day with such a cloud between us. Can you not believe——”

It was difficult to him at this moment to speak openly of a misconception so offensive, plainly as she had acknowledged it; and it seemed at once an easier, more natural, and more satisfactory answer to a thought so painful to take her hand in his own and hold it as he went on:—

“Really you make me ashamed, not exactly of your fears, but of having seemed to admit that there can be any ground for them. I half wish there were more. It could be no such terrible calamity if—if a chance blow did solve all difficulties once for all. And, Ivy, I know you would not say what you did not mean, but I think you sometimes try hard to feel what you wish to say. I believe you would be sorry for me at the moment; I am

sure you would not wish me hurt; but why take pains to make yourself miserable over—the very best thing that could befall you?”

“Oh! Ethert, how cruel!” The poor girl could say no more, but Ethert fancied her shocked rather than grieved or wounded.

“Nay, why try so earnestly to feel, to throw yourself into, a part that cannot be real? Do you imagine that I am so selfishly unjust as to expect it of you—that I wish you to go on suffering and fretting as you do one day longer than is needful, or think you ought to be sorry to be set free? My death, if there were any chance of that, would free you safely and silently, and secure your inheritance beyond all risk. I know that you don’t, you can’t bear to wish for it, you can’t feel unkindly even to me; but why try to persuade yourself to fear it? A chance blow that should give me rest and peace would be no disaster to me; and for your release without pain, debate, or scandal I ought to be—should be thankful.”

“Ethert, how can you?” she answered, hardly able to command her voice, and quite unable to

keep back her tears. “Would you not grieve at the thought of losing me?”

Almost any other woman would have reversed the question; but Ivy was too thoroughly generous and too transparently truthful to allow even the most natural resentment to provoke a taunt in which she did not believe. On this one point at least she had read her husband's feeling, from the first hour of their marriage, more truly than he himself had done. Her question forced Ethert to realise, suddenly and with painful sharpness, that however coolly he had contemplated the rupture of the tie between them, such as it was,—whether by his own death or by that revolt on her part which he had always anticipated, if of late with more and more of reluctance,—there had never been a moment when he could have borne the idea that the formal bond should be broken by the early termination of that other life, so pure, so harmless, so unhappy. Why, he could not have told. Perhaps that such a conclusion would have shocked the native instincts of justice, perhaps that the remorse of which he was as

yet scarcely conscious would have been stung when too late into intolerable activity. She saw, and was much moved to see, that he actually shivered at her simple question, which for some reason brought the idea before him with terrible vividness and reality, as if the suggested loss were immediately probable.

“You would be sorry? Then, Ethert, how is it you always judge me so hardly? If you had—had been content with me—if I had made you happy—if I had any pleasant memories to live on, any loving word to remember, since you ceased to like and make much of your child-cousin—still it would be too cruel, too terrible! I could not bear it, I could not endure to dream of it! But as it is, if I were left alone, utterly alone in the world, to remember how lonely I had been even with you, that I was never anything but a pain and vexation to you—to feel that I had spoilt your whole life beyond hope of reparation, that it had all been sacrificed to me; if you left me without a word of pardon, if I could never hope to hear you say you had forgiven me—Ethert, I cannot think Providence could ever be so hard on me; for I think even

you would pity me, would spare me *that*, if you could feel what it would be.”

“Even you!” The sting was the sharper that the speaker was so evidently unconscious of it, so innocent of any wish to wound. A few moments elapsed before he could answer her calmly.

“You are so soft, so good, Ivy, that you cannot bear the thought of harm to one you once loved so well. But do not speak as if I could think only of my own trials, as if I did not feel for yours. I have always thought, have always owned, that you were even more hardly treated, more cruelly compelled than myself; and though I must feel that after the first shock you would rejoice in any means of release—nay, if you claim release at any price before long—I could not blame you; I could hardly dare to wish it otherwise.”

“You say these things—I don’t know, and I don’t wish to know, what you mean. But I know what a sacrifice you made for me, and that you find it more intolerable than you expected. Am I to be less grateful, less dutiful, for that? If—if you had married me . . . be-

cause it pleased you . . . I should have loved you, have done all I could to satisfy you, and I should have been miserable if I had failed. But now, do you think I do not feel how much more I ought to do, do not know that I must bear anything and everything, when you sacrificed yourself instead of pleasing yourself? Do you think I forget what I promised, that you speak as if I could—as if I thought, or cared, or wished for anything but that you will bear with me now, and some day—will forgive me?”

“Ivy, if you had ever been in fault, I could have nothing to forgive—in you. You speak of your promises. I don’t forget; but—I know what our understanding was, and I should be ashamed to exact anything, even a show of regard or interest in me, in right of pledges we both knew to be a form. You were told *that*, before one word had passed between ourselves. Your reference to your own vows can only be meant to remind me of mine, and I repeat, you knew those to be unreal. If we were forced to lie before others, I told no lie to you.”

“Nor I, Ethert,” she answered, very gently, but with a sorely puzzled and frightened air.

“I meant every word I said ; and indeed, indeed I thought I had kept my faith. Oh, Ethert ! if you think not, tell me where I have not been true ?”

“What matter what was *said*, Ivy ? We both knew that nothing was meant, and your forced promise could never have been binding.”

“If I had been forced, would that alter my duty afterwards ? If I had been child enough to yield for fear of scolding, or of anything they could do—what difference would that make ? But you took care—do you forget ?—that I could say no if I chose. Ethert, did you want me to say it ? I thought not—I only wished to do what you would have me. No, I was not forced.”

“You were not beaten or threatened ; but you were compelled none the less. And, if it had not been so, I could not find a flaw in the way you have kept your faith.”

“And then you say—no, you take for granted—that I do not love you, do not care even for your safety, for your life ! How *can* you, Ethert ? If you had asked me before—when I

knew nothing—then I might have been careless, then there might have been some excuse if I sometimes forgot. I should have thought I did not need to remember. What could I do but love and honour? But when I knew all was not well, and when you showed you did not trust me—even in the least thing of all—of course I considered, recollected all I was to promise; then I knew I must be careful, watchful to keep my word to the uttermost. Do tell me, Ethert, where I have seemed to fail? Have I ever disobeyed you when I could guess your wishes? Do I not honour you? Do I not accept your will, and try to think it must be right because it is yours? Or—can you really doubt whether I love you? I suppose you must mean that, when you say—I could bear—to lose you. What *can* you think of me? Do you think, night after night, when I knew only that you were not at home, did not know where you might be, I could have lain down alone—could ever have slept, if I had not prayed for you? Or do you think I dare speak to *Him* with a lie in my heart? Dare I kneel at all, if I thought I was false to one word of my mar-

riage vow, unless I had asked your forgiveness as well as His? Do you forget, Ethert—I know you do not think so much of it, but—when your mother was in London, do you forget *where* we knelt together? Do you think what it is you have said—what I must feel in hearing it—what a wife’s shame is if she is not loyal in her love, not true to those promises?”

Her tone, low and quiet as it was, was so passionately earnest, so simply solemn as she appealed to the absolute sincerity of her religious faith, so faltering in the last emphatic sentences, that the answer died on Ethert’s lips. He saw that the final remonstrance was as utterly loyal in its almost infantine innocence as those that had preceded it. Ivy could draw no distinction between the parts of one engagement equally sacred throughout; she could not practically conceive, could not entertain the thought of that deeper, darker breach of conjugal faith whose formless, unseen horror cast a shadow of awe over the lighter sin of which she thought herself accused.

“I see, Ivy,” he replied at last, with no common effort, “how cruelly I have wronged

you throughout; how much more cruel was the wrong in which I had no wilful share. Then—were you not told why I would not ask your consent myself—that I could not insult you with the truth, and would not cheat you with a lie? Were you never warned that my promise did not pretend to be true? Have you not understood *why* I shrank from the iniquity of claiming all in return for nothing—that I had no right to expect or exact anything more than the compliance that was as necessary to your comfort and welfare as to mine? No? God forgive me, then! Indeed I thought that had been made plain enough!”

“Ethert,” she said—not a little encouraged and soothed by his altered and softened tone, and this first evidence of repentant tenderness towards herself, while frightened at the passion of his words and manner, at the indignation, at once embittered and restrained by remorse, which she could not understand—“I don’t think I was told anything very clearly, except I understood that you wished me—that you agreed with Mamma—that I was obeying your will as well as hers. But—if you are not angry

with me still for that—if you believe that I am, that I have tried to be true—does the rest matter now? Does it signify what I fancied, why I—agreed, then?”

“Does it matter—whether I lied deliberately to you, as well as for you! You speak of your vow, Ivy; if you took mine for a reality, what must you think of me?”

“It was very hard on you, Ethert. You could not help being very angry, very bitter, when you found yourself forced into such a sacrifice against your will, your feelings—and then slandered for it. And it is not the same thing; that vow always means so much more to women No, I did not mean to complain in the least. I never will, however you think it right that I should suffer for such a wrong. Only, Ethert, do not speak as if I could ever forget what you did, as if I could rebel, could do anything but try to please you, to make it endurable to you, and wait till you can forget. And now, you will have pity; you will remember what I must feel if—if anything happens, and you have not forgiven me?”

“*Forgiven—you!*”

He had taken both her hands in his own, and looked into her eyes, as if doubting whether she could possibly mean what, nevertheless, she had spoken, not for the first time, so simply and so earnestly. His look caught and fascinated hers She *felt* therein what she could not understand—not merely penitence, pity, restored affection, but something deeper and different; something which no experience of hers could possibly interpret. The spirits were reconciled; between the minds, the hearts, there was but a film of doubt, which in another instant a touch, a clasp, a kiss must have dissolved. But they were interrupted. Meta, who had the tact to apprehend that the intrusion of a servant on that interview might be even less welcome than her own, had taken care not to repeat Ivy's mistake, and approached through the study, where her figure was at once visible to Ivy, if not to Ethert, who, in turning to his wife, had turned away from the window.

“Ethert, there is another messenger. They want you to go at once.”

“Good-bye then, dear Ivy. Be content;

there is no danger. Pearl,”—at a sign from him, she followed through the study—“you remember our favourite drama, ‘Philip van Artevelde’? If by chance anything did happen to me, find the Regent’s farewell to Elena, and show Ivy the three lines you thought so touching.”

“‘If not, I know that I shall fall forgiven!’” she said. “Ethert, you think there is more danger than you will own!”

“No, not at all,” he answered, lightly, as he mounted. But Meta thought that the care with which he adjusted the thong of his staff about his wrist somewhat belied his words. “But accident is always possible, and I had not time to say what I should have liked her to remember.”

CHAPTER XII.

STORM.

THE tenantry of Glynnehurst, numbering more than one hundred stalwart men, all in the prime of life, all armed with weapons much resembling the ordinary constable's staff, or short loaded cudgels, most of them drilled by the volunteer movement into very tolerable discipline and cohesion, greeted their young leader with a cordial cheer. They were in the highest spirits, inspired by the true English love of fighting—so different from the Irish love of a row or riot, and yet in effect so closely resembling it—perfectly indifferent to that inferiority of numbers of which they were fully aware, and which weighed somewhat heavily on the mind of their chief. The road by which they were to approach the scene of

action led to the back of the extensive range of buildings, all enclosed within a high and tolerably strong brick wall, that formed Mr. Verner's factory. In front was an extensive open space into which the principal street of Stapleton debouched; and across this, their right resting on the gates of the factory, were drawn up the regular police of the district, supported by some two hundred special constables in the rear. Along the side of the works, opening into the street just before it entered the wide space above mentioned, ran a somewhat narrow, dingy back lane, with blank walls on either side. The main street was already filled with a rabble, partly consisting of the men on strike, partly, as is always the case, of sight-seers, men, women, and even children. Such are always drawn into the stream by a curiosity which is excited by the approach of danger, and yet never takes account of that danger—a curiosity not so much indifferent to peril as unconscious of it. The presence of this element in a crowd is always a chief difficulty for the defenders of order, since any vigorous measures taken against the rioters are sure

to involve and often fall most heavily upon those who are guilty of inquisitive folly only, especially upon those whom sex or infancy renders helpless. Within call, but quite out of sight, was a squadron of Her Majesty's 36th Lancers, unluckily the only cavalry force within reach. The cooler of the magistrates, like Ethert, regretted the nature of the weapon with which the soldiers were armed, as likely to do more harm and cause less of panic terror than the sabre. As they reached a somewhat narrow, open space at the back of the works, Ethert's men were halted by the official in charge, a subaltern of police, formerly a sergeant-major in the army.

"You must guard the back of the factory, sir, in case any attack should be made on this side, of which we have no warning. We think and hope that the mob, if they do attack, will come up the main street, where we are prepared to meet them. But there are among them two or three men who have been concerned in serious riots before—they say one who served in the American army,—and they may have the sense to attack on both sides, in

which case there will be trouble. If that happens, probably the sooner the soldiers are sent for the better."

"Avoid that as long as you can, till nothing else can avert defeat and bloodshed; and for heaven's sake let us have no use of weapons except by the soldiers."

"Major Aspeden (the chief of the police) and Colonel Reverdy have agreed with the magistrates on that point, Sir Ethert. The soldiers will come down before the factory can be forced. Well, you will not stir from here till you know that no attack is to be made on the rear; then you will support us."

"I thought we were to have one of your officers in command here?"

"No, sir. At least, I know nothing of that. My orders are to give you my message, and then return to the front."

"How many can pass abreast up that lane?" said Ethert to a young volunteer officer beside him, who had with difficulty been restrained from putting on his volunteer uniform on this occasion.

"Four, Sir Ethert, hardly more."

“Then form the men four deep, so that if need be we can wheel at once and pass up the lane. I won’t dismount till the last moment. Now, men, steady, silence! behave as if you were on parade.”

So large a part of his little force consisted of volunteers, or men who had passed through the volunteer battalion of the district, that the order was understood and obeyed implicitly. The men stood at attention, their staves ready, for more than an hour, before a sudden cry and rattle in the front told that the attack had begun with a shower of stones. Ethert, riding up the lane on his right, perceived at once that the mob, though furious, were afraid to advance; and were endeavouring to provoke an attack, as well as to disorganise the ranks of the defenders of order, by these missiles.

“That was well thought of,” he said. “I am afraid the mob have leaders who know what they are about.”

A second volley of stones, which did no little mischief, was answered by a charge from the police. They broke some heads, by no means always the right ones; and Ethert, still watch-

ing the fight in front, but able from his seat on horseback to command the approach to the rear also, saw to his great annoyance that the fringe of sight-seers still attended and to some extent sheltered the flanks of the mob. Many of the latter were armed with hammers or bludgeons of dangerous length and weight, and after their first repulse began to form more compactly, with an evident disposition to use their formidable weapons. Suddenly, evidently under orders, the uniformed policemen fell back; and their chief on horseback rode forward, indifferent to the volley of stones with which he was received, and which his horse endured almost as firmly as the rider.

“Those of you who don’t mean mischief,” he shouted, “out of the way; and those who do, let the women and children make their way back out of danger.”

An English mob is above the cowardly trick, common with Frenchmen and Irishmen, of placing women in the van to embarrass the movements of the soldiery and police. One of the leaders of the rioters, a tall, stalwart, brawny navvy, stepped forward, raising his hand to keep back

his comrades and check the shower of missiles.

“Keep back your men, sir, for five minutes, and we will try to get the women and children out of the way.”

It was a curious sort of exchange of courtesies, a sending of flags of truce between the rioters and the defenders of the law, a recognition as it were of belligerent rights on the part of the former utterly inconsistent alike with law and decorum. The chief of police was fully conscious of the responsibility involved in so awkward and unusual a concession ; but, a gentleman by birth and a soldier by profession, he was far too anxious for the safety of the helpless creatures now wedged in between the mob which filled the centre of the street and the closed doors of the houses, to flinch from any opprobrium, any responsibility, that might fall upon himself, so only he could protect them. When the five minutes had elapsed the front of the mob presented a more formidable appearance than ever. There were no women or children among them, and few sight-seers. As far as the eye of the rider could see the street was filled by a dense mass of men,

all evidently belonging to the class engaged in the strike, or to that much worse, and, when once riot is let loose, much more dangerous order who fringe the skirts of organized and disciplined labour.

“Now, sir,” said the leader of the mob, again stepping forward, “we are ready. Go back to your men.”

“If you have sense enough to do what you have done,” said the Chief Constable, “you have surely sense enough to understand the folly you are committing. You know nothing but evil to yourselves can come of this. Even should you wreck that factory, you know you have a heavy reckoning to pay afterwards; and before you can do serious mischief the soldiers will be upon you.”

“We have calculated all that. We mean to give yonder capitalist tyrant a lesson, cost what it may. Go back, sir.”

The discipline of the mob was not such that their leader could prevent the enforcement of this warning by some half-dozen stones, thrown probably rather as threats than with deliberate intention to injure, since not one of them touch-

ed either the horse or the rider. The officer obeyed the injunction, and fell back to take his place at the head of his force. Then the mob rushed forward, so far disciplined and arrayed that all their front rank were well armed. In another minute one half of the open space in front of the factory was filled by the rabble, who surged over into the lane; and their van was engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with the police, and the body of special constables who supported them. Ethert fell back to the head of his party.

“There is no appearance of an attack in this direction,” he said. “Mr. Lawson,” to the volunteer subaltern, the son of his agent, “keep half your men here, and be prepared in case of danger. If you are beaten, fall back into the factory, and close the gate in the rear. You will only have to hold it till the soldiers come up. Right face! The first twelve ranks follow me.”

He dismounted, and, placing himself at their head, led them at the double-quick up the lane, charging right into the flank of the mob.

“Strike hard!” was his order. “Do all the damage you can at this point, and we may have

a chance to break them altogether before worse comes of it."

This attack took the rioters utterly by surprise. They were not prepared to meet any other enemy than those in their front. Their leaders, all in advance, could give no directions; and in five minutes not only had Ethert and his party cut their way completely across the street, but the rabble in front, aware that their rear was attacked, and fancying that the soldiers had fallen upon them in that quarter, were struck with panic and gave way; sweeping away with them, however, most of the small body of special constables who had forced their way into the midst, and among them Ethert himself. At first the retreating rioters were not aware of this, as no marked distinction of dress, like that either of volunteers or regular policemen, indicated the enemies in their midst; and for awhile the crush was such that no exchange of blows within the crowd itself would have been possible. Presently, however, those farthest from the danger reached a point where the meeting of four roads allowed of dispersion; and here, seeing no immediate

peril, they took courage. Ethert, with half a dozen of his party immediately around him, was endeavouring to extricate himself as quietly and quickly as possible, and had reached a point where the ranks of the mob were loose enough to promise a practicable path, when some of the rioters, noting the dress and bearing of a gentleman, recognised an enemy. Among these was Meta's assailant, still wearing a patch over the wound received from the handle of Ethert's riding-whip; and, under his instigation, several of his comrades made straight at the small party. The latter drew back at once, till, setting their backs against the wall and standing shoulder to shoulder, they prepared for a fight in which the chance of serious consequences was even greater than it appeared, no friends being near, the number of their assailants overwhelming, and many of their weapons quite as deadly as those used on the battlefield in the days of armour. Sledge-hammers that would have cracked a helmet like a nut-shell, and mallets, pickaxe handles, and the like, all wielded by stouter arms than those of the factory operatives of the North, might well inflict a fatal wound; while those of the special

constables were at once shorter and less formidable. The man whom Ethert had thrashed carried about the most dangerous weapon of all, a broken pickaxe ; and with this aimed a stroke that might well have made him a murderer. His purpose was thwarted, however, by the skill and promptitude of the man next to Ethert, who, as the weapon was lifted, closed, and struck with all his force on the back of the hand that held it, so bruising and crushing the knuckles that the fellow let the instrument drop with a howl ; and Ethert, seizing the chance, struck him so heavily and directly in the face that he fell, if not stunned, at any rate cowed, quelled for the moment. But this first disaster only infuriated the assailants, and before two minutes had passed the little party were completely overpowered and separated. No serious blow had actually touched Ethert ; but, parted from his friends, grasped on both sides by three or four stout arms, he had given himself up for lost, when—a sudden sound, a cry from what had been the front of the crowd, a clatter and crash, sent a new thrill of panic through the whole mass. Ethert was thrown to the ground, bruised and stunned ; but, before he could at-

tempt to rise, was conscious that his assailants had withdrawn, that his chief danger lay in the feet that were recklessly trampling over him. An accidental blow from one of these deprived him temporarily of all recollection. When he regained consciousness, the street was clear of all but some half dozen more or less seriously wounded men. The soldiers, called in, not to repair defeat, but to complete the victory of the civilians, had been ordered or provoked to charge; and had swept away the rabble as cavalry can generally do, with somewhat more mischief from the points of the lances than the sabre, unless used with savage and deadly intention, would have been likely to inflict. One of his tenants, kneeling beside him, was trying to force between his teeth a small flask of brandy, but desisted on seeing that the patient had regained consciousness.

“Are you badly hurt, Sir Ethert?”

“I think not,” he answered, still dizzy, and by no means sure of his own safety. “None of their blows came home, but they trod over me and trampled me not a little. Help me up; I think I can stand.”

By the time he had ascertained that no bones

were broken, that even the blow on the head had not been serious, and was endeavouring to shake off the dust from his clothes, the Chief Constable and a party of his men, who followed to pick up for judgment the victims of the soldiers' weapons, and if possible the ringleaders of the riot, had come up. Under their guidance, Ethert speedily reached the inn where the magistrates and the chief manufacturers were assembled, and, after cleansing his clothes and person, and bathing his bruised face and head, joined their council. The officer of police and the Colonel of the Lancers were present; all, except the military men, in a more or less excited and angry mood. The energy with which Ethert pleaded for peace and pardon to the vanquished not a little surprised many of those who knew how vigorously he had exerted himself for the enforcement of order; how urgently he had insisted that if, on the defeat of the civil defenders of order, the soldiers were called upon, they should use their weapons in earnest.

"Yes," said Ethert, in answer to a remark on the latter point, "I would not have had the soldiers called in at all as things went. They should always be our last resort, but their ap-

pearance should always be decisive. If infantry fire over the heads of the rabble, or cavalry charge without hurting, without effectually dispersing them, a fatal lesson is taught, a fatal encouragement given to disorder. As a rule, an English mob believes that the soldiers are irresistible, and that is the one great check upon them. Teach them the contrary, and nothing but artillery—which means in most cases an interval of anarchy and havoc, and always horrible slaughter—will convince and quell them. Now, they had been beaten in fair fight with us ; and, if you had not brought down the Lancers, I believe there would have been no malice borne. As it is, if no one is killed, and you let those who have been wounded escape with the punishment they have already received, I fancy a compromise may be reached in a few days ; and if not, the strike will pass off without another outbreak.”

This was not the view of the majority, or that which prevailed. But Ethert’s intervention had nevertheless a thoroughly wholesome effect, not only conciliating towards himself an amount of trust which might probably enable

him to interpose on many future occasions as an arbitrator between the capitalist and the workman, but moderating an injudicious severity which would have borne fruit in lasting resentment and ill-will. As the mob, whatever they had intended, had done no serious mischief, the angry feeling of the magistrates and gentry was inspired simply by fear. Vengeance taken by fear, when once the excitement of conflict is over, is neither satisfactory to English feeling nor effective even for its immediate purpose, since the vanquished feel that the terror it is intended to strike is at least reciprocal.

As the meeting dispersed, Ethert noticed a certain whispering among three or four, of whom Mr. Verner was one, and glances directed towards himself. As he left the building, the last-named gentleman followed and stopped him.

"I am sorry—I hope you will forgive me, Sir Ethert, if . . . but I thought it was a more friendly part to let you know at once what you would see or hear of soon, and what—perhaps knowing it at once may enable you to take some step to crush the mischief."

He placed in Ethert's hand a copy of the number of the *Age* published that day, folded

in such a manner that the following paragraph at once caught the eye :—

“A new light, and with it a darker cloud, has been thrown on the character and position of the wealthy baronet whose connection with the press is a subject of so much curiosity to others, who has shown himself so furiously ashamed of that most creditable incident in a career of personal and literary insignificance. It seems that the author of — and —, the deputy sub-editor of a Tory contemporary, has made one of those mistakes which even charity can hardly compassionate. In the marriage into which he hurried the infant heiress of the family estates, over her brother’s grave and beside her father’s death-bed, the fortune-hunter involuntarily played the dupe, and not the duper. The lady is, it seems, the illegitimate daughter of a bigamist, whose real wife died only a few weeks ago in the foreign lunatic asylum in which she had suffered a life-long captivity. Our readers may imagine the disgust and dismay of the fortunate bridegroom on learning that he had been the victim of his own greed and haste ; that he had needlessly encumbered himself with a portionless bride,

if not with a dubious succession. His mortification may perhaps account for extravagances of conduct which, to those who lacked the clue, seemed at first sight to demand the indulgence we give to incipient insanity."

Mr. Verner had, as Ethert noticed on raising his head from the perusal of these sentences, considerably disappeared. As he mounted his horse to return home, he instinctively clenched his hand on the handle of his horsewhip.

"I should like to repeat the flogging I gave that cur. This is, of course, his revenge; but—— Good God! if *she* should hear of it! And how—how is it to be kept from her? Or, if she does not hear, she will see, suspect something in the manner of all our neighbours. And of course her mother—— What is to be done? I wish now I had paid. Her peace of mind was worth far more; but, after all, one can't submit to limitless extortion; and, when once you pay hush-money, as Brand said, demand follows demand, the secret comes out at last, and the disgrace is multiplied tenfold by the evidence of fear one has given. But what *is* to be done? She would never see the *Age*. but, in some form or other, she will hear

or she will feel the truth. Poor Ivy—hard indeed if all has been done, all endured for nothing! After all, though, who will care now? It is not for her, at least, as it would have been when this would have left her nameless. When the first scandal is over, the nine days' wonder talked out, no one will care to remember that the present Lady Glynne was not the legitimate daughter of the late baronet This alters, settles everything; if only Another woman would turn upon me; retaliate neglect and aversion pretend to fancy that I had repented of disinterestedness, not of coldness and estrangement; and even Ivy will find it hard to forgive But no matter:—this makes our marriage plainly and obviously a benefit to her; clears me before the world for the future, if not for the past It was not her fault if it brought me nothing but trouble, irritation, discredit; she was ready to fulfil her share of the compact, poor child! She never seems to have known what it meant; and she has a right to the fullest advantage of it—to all the comfort and support I can give her, at home as well as abroad, now."

CHAPTER XIII.

SEEN BY LIGHTNING.

“**M**ETA,” said Ivy, when they were left alone together, “what did Ethert mean? What had frightened you?”

Meta hesitated, at first inclined to withhold an answer; an easy thing, since, the moment after she had spoken, Ivy remembered her own former disclaimer of any right or wish to inquire into confidences exchanged between her husband and their ward. But Meta had grown partially, vaguely conscious of something strained, some defect of ease and openness in the terms on which Ivy stood with Ethert, which might make her draw from such apparent reserve inferences more distressing than the simple truth need be.

“No, you need not tell me,” Ivy continued, “and perhaps I ought not to have asked.”

“Indeed, Ivy, there was nothing to alarm

you, nothing Ethert would not have said to you, only he fancies you more timid than you are. He had his special constable's staff, and I had questioned him about it. Indeed that was all."

Ivy was not satisfied, but at this moment their conversation was interrupted as the letters of the late post were brought in. One of these was directed in a foreign hand, and bore a scarcely legible foreign postmark. It was directed to "Milady Glynné," and for a moment Ivy wondered whether it was meant for herself or for her mother.

"I don't like to open it without knowing," she said to Meta, "and yet I should not like to send it to Mamma if it belongs to me."

"I cannot make out the postmark," Meta observed. "And did not Ethert say something about some French silks you were to order—or he was to write for you?"

"He—that was to—I dare say it may be that, Meta. At any rate, I will venture to open it."

The first words almost convinced Ivy that the letter had not been intended for her, but so riveted her attention that she could not withdraw it till she had taken in all the contents of

the brief, brutal menace, and perceived, as by a sudden lightning-flash of unconscious reasoning, how fearfully they explained everything she had been unable to understand, how certainly, hopelessly they were confirmed by every incident connected with her marriage that had been most painfully burnt into her memory.

“MILADY,

“After I served Sir Glynne so many years, after I saved him from a felon’s prison, I asked you for the payment of his debt. You refer me to your *avoué*, and Mr. Brand puts me off with a miserable hundred or two. And you think I will bear this, that I will not punish your insolence? I tell you, madam, young Sir Glynne shall know, and all England, all the English world shall know, that the real milady lived and died, after your daughter’s marriage, in my house; that you are only the harlot, that Sir Glynne has married, not the heiress, but the bastard of the *feu* baronet. You will see something of it in the papers. Let that teach you all shall be printed, if you do not pay at once all you owe me.

“CARL HARTOG.”

“What *is* the matter, Ivy?” cried Meta, as her friend sank into a chair, her face white to the lips, her hands closely pressed upon her heart, dropping the terrible letter upon the floor. Meta picked it up, and, with a self-restraint, a loyalty the more commendable in so young a girl, folded it unseen, replaced it in the envelope, and thrust this into its owner’s pocket before she repeated her question; endeavouring at the same time to support Ivy’s frame, as she seemed sinking into a sort of swoon, and to soothe her by caresses not fonder or softer than her tone itself.

“What is it, Ivy, darling? What has happened?”

“I cannot tell you, Meta. Oh! I know it all now. He may well loathe and hate me! Oh, Ethert, if I had known what I was doing!”

Meta was horror-struck. She would never have guessed that there was more, at worst, than a certain coldness—it did not seem possible that the grave courtesy of the one or the gentleness of the other could admit of a quarrel—between her guardian and his wife. But she had seen enough to realize, when thus enlight-

ened, that the wild half conscious words conveyed a terrible if an exaggerated truth—that Ivy certainly believed in her husband's complete estrangement, and something more than estrangement. Still, though her first impulse was to console her friend by a passionate denial, she had tact enough to restrain it—to perceive that while she knew so little it was best to recognize nothing. A moment's reflection warned her not to seem to have heard or understood words whose utterance Ivy might bitterly repent, if not allowed to forget it; warned her not to do mischief that might prove irreparable, by accepting the knowledge of a conjugal secret thus unconsciously revealed in a moment of agony.

“Ivy, dear, you don't know what you say. I was wrong to ask you; only try, try to be calm, dear, till Ethert comes—I am sure he can help and comfort you. He never failed, never could but help and pity any one in trouble, and you of course above all. Don't say anything till he comes; only”—as Ivy rose, and, feeling with her hands as if unable to see, moved towards the door—“don't go away and shut

yourself up alone, dearest ; do let me stay with you !”

“I cannot, Meta, I cannot ! You must let me be alone. Oh ! my God ! what have I done ? And I thought him so hard—and he knew—*this !*”

During the long hours that followed, Meta was perhaps almost as much to be pitied as Ivy herself ; crushed and well-nigh stunned as was the latter by the terrible blow so suddenly dealt, the revelation so unexpected, so unspeakably shocking to that purity of mind, that absolute innocence from which as yet all knowledge of evil had been repelled by the spirit’s utter inability to assimilate it. Refused admittance to Ivy’s room, hearing from time to time a low moaning within, yet more appalled by the more frequent silence, the poor child could not rest, could hardly be still for an instant ; and yet struggled hard not to make still more clear to the household the existence of some terrible trouble, some strange and painful family secret. The more intelligent of the servants, whose curiosity had been excited to the uttermost by the mystery of the sudden marriage, must be

conscious of something unusual in the long and absolute seclusion which their young mistress would not permit any one to interrupt.

When Ivy would not descend to luncheon, would not even open her door, would not answer Meta's appeal, the young girl's position became painful indeed. Her distress in feeling or fancying the wondering, enquiring eyes of the servants upon her seemed hourly more and more intolerable. But when evening arrived, and Ethert was still absent, Ivy still obstinately deaf to her entreaties, Meta's eagerness to find some help, attempt something—her terror of some fearful result to one she loved (more dearly than she had been hitherto aware, as Ivy won, quietly as surely, the love of all around her)—and her sense at once of serious responsibility and of utter helplessness, drove her almost beside herself. She *must* do something—she *could* do nothing—and . . . what might happen any moment? She could not even send to Ethert, she knew not what had become of him; she dared not, though the thought occurred to her more than once, summon the doctor, of whose long and intimate acquaintance with the family she

was of course ignorant. Pacing restlessly to and fro, listening eagerly for any sound that could bear on the subject of her excitement, she was deaf and blind to all else that passed around her. But long before, in a less over-strained state of the nerves, she could have heard them, she was roused by a sound of hoofs on the gravel of the road through the park. Then came silence, as they passed on to the turf—then the deadened beat as they approached so near that, even on the turf, her strained hearing could distinguish them; and, before Ethert had dismounted, she stood in the porch, her hair fallen over her shoulders, her flushed cheeks and outstretched hands betraying, even in the deep twilight, her intense excitement and distress. He sprang down, exceedingly alarmed; instantly guessing what had happened, and fearing even worse.

“Ivy?” he asked, gasping for breath. “What is it, Pearl, and where is she?”

“In her room, Ethert.”

“What has happened?”

“She had a letter. Of course I did not see it; but——”

He threw off the hand she had laid on his

arm, not to detain him, but in the intense anxiety of the moment, and had reached the door of his wife's chamber before he had even thought what was to be said—nay, how much she actually knew. His first knock was unanswered; his second answered only an hysterical cry, which made his heart beat more violently, which sent a thrill of deeper terror through his frame than any previous peril or surprise had ever been able to do.

“Ivy!” he called; but his fright and excitement gave to his tone a sharpness which evidently increased the agitation, the terror, whatever was the emotion that restrained her from answering or attempting to admit him. He heard, in reply, only a low wail; then, as he repeated her name, a terrified, “No, no; do leave me!” in which he *felt* the shudder that had shaken her frame as she spoke, and simply dared not press her further. In helpless alarm and distress he turned away to seek for Meta, whose energy and high spirit he knew and trusted, who alone could possibly serve him in that strait; and on whose power to exercise over Ivy's shattered nerves and distracted spirit the calming, controlling influence he had

evidently forfeited, he relied rather by instinct than from reflection. He had not far to go. Three or four steps brought him almost directly above her as she stood, tearful and trembling, on the stairs, just out of sight of the closed door, but as near as she could come without fear of intrusion; either unable to bear her own prolonged suspense and alarm, or aware that such help as she could render might be needed.

“She will not see—she will not speak to me, Pearl! What am I to do?”

“Ethert, do you know what it is? Of course,” she went on, speaking quickly, “I don’t want you to tell me—I do not know anything. But, if you know, you will be kind; you will speak very gently?”

Such an appeal from a third person, from Meta above all, on his wife’s behalf, would at another moment have shocked both his conscience and his instincts of good breeding—would have made him even more angry with himself than with her who had thus betrayed her knowledge of his shortcoming. But at this moment, though he recognised and was stung by the incongruity, his all-absorbing anxiety, almost rising into terror, left him

leisure for no lesser thought—left him hardly energy to be displeased or impatient.

“Don’t talk nonsense, Pearl ; what can I do ? She will not listen—she will not see me, and my very voice seems to frighten her . . . Cannot you persuade her ?”

“Since she got that letter,” Meta answered, still speaking as rapidly as she could consistently with distinct utterance, “she will not let me come near her. She has locked herself up there, and she only moans or is silent. Ethert, you must see her ; and—she thinks so much of—of doing what you wish—tell her she *must*.”

“But, Meta, I told you she is utterly terrified at my voice. I am afraid to alarm her more. Cannot you ?”

“I will try,” Meta said, simply. “If I can get at her, will you wait for her in her boudoir ?”

Ethert, obeying implicitly, in his utter helplessness, the directions even of a young girl, listened with intense anxiety as Meta, in a quiet, gentle, but very decided tone, delivered the message she had taken upon herself to frame.

“Ivy, Ethert wants you. He says you are to come to him—at once, please, dear.”

He could hear her hand laid very softly on the handle of the door, then, after some moments, heard it open. He shivered from head to foot, almost as intensely agitated as either of the girls, when Meta, herself controlling with no little effort the emotion that whitened her cheek, entered; leading or supporting Ivy, who seemed but half conscious, save for the violent shudder that shook her frame as she raised her downcast eyes for a moment and recognised her husband's presence. Then, as Ethert came forward, leaving her to him, Meta turned, quitted the room at once, and closed the door. But Ivy withdrew hastily, with a shrinking that but too painfully recalled the recent past, from the support she needed so much, and sank helplessly on to the sofa. Then, turning away from him, she buried in the cushions the face she had covered with her hands, and burst into violent, almost hysterical sobbing; shivering still more at his touch, as, kneeling beside her, he strove gently to remove her hands and raise her in his arms.

“No, no, Ethert! do not touch me now! Ah,

you might well—you might well shrink from me !”

“Ivy, *ma petite*, how can you? I can guess what you have heard. You can have heard nothing I have not known—nothing I did not know from the first.”

“You knew it?” with almost a scream. “Ah, yes—and that . . . no wonder you hate me !”

“Nonsense,” he said, decidedly, though with a trembling voice, softening the rough word by a tone which made it sound to her ears scarcely less tender than the pet name, never used since their marriage, that was so full of sweet associations for her; and this time, overcoming perforce her reluctance, he lifted her from the cushions and, seating himself beside her, held her within his arm. “I would have kept this from you—you know I would, Ivy. You shall tell me when you can what it is, how much you have learnt; but meantime remember it was to spare you this that I allowed you to be coerced and kept in ignorance. This was the secret of our marriage. To keep it from the world you were hurried into *that*; to keep it from yourself I forbade the explanation you so naturally desired. Dear Ivy, even if you think that was

not true kindness, you must see, you must feel, that it was the act of one who felt kindly and tenderly towards you. You must own how unreasonable has been your fancy that even then I disliked—did not care for you; and now, you know”

Still shivering or trembling all over, still half averting her face, Ivy controlled herself by a strenuous and prolonged effort so far as to make some sort of hesitating, half coherent reply.

“I see now; I begin to understand all . . . everything I thought so hard. Oh, Ethert, I am so shamed, so grieved! No, not for myself, not because this has come upon me, but that I should have ever thought, ever felt, as if I had anything to complain of. If I had only known, had dreamed, what you were really doing, what cause you had for every word that sounded so bitter, so cold!—And how can you hold me now? . . . how could you, Ethert?—how could you ever bear to give me your hand—your name? . . . yes, only because I had none of my own. Mamma spoke of shame; but if I could have thought how great was the shame from which you would have saved me, you

know . . . Oh Ethert! what a dreadful, shocking thing I let you do! How could you do it?—you, too, who think so much of other differences—differences of rank and race? I remember your laughing at Tennyson's pretty romances; you said you would always fancy a scent of the soil about the gardener's daughter, that Cophetua's beggar-maid could be no more to you than a negress. Ah, I have remembered all those things in these long, dreadful hours! How could you stoop to one so much lower than your own servants?—you who called honour 'this world's pearl of price,' how could you accept such dishonour? Was it mere generosity to womanhood? Was it pity for a young girl's ignorance of the terrible shame and sorrow that were threatening her? Or did you still care, care so tenderly, feel so deeply, for a . . . for one you had indulged and petted while you thought her your cousin—that you could stoop so low?"

"Hush, hush, Ivy! my cousin always! There could be no stooping on either side."

"Ethert, that is not so; you know it is not! If—now I understand—I could not inherit from my father, because—I am not his daughter . . .

I have no relations . . . unless . . . can I call her my mother, still?"

The question so utterly surprised him that he hesitated awhile, and she half consciously sought her answer in his eyes. The mingled perplexity, shame, distress in her look touched him to the very quick—touched him with terror as well as with pity. Was her mind shaken by the suddenness and horror of the blow?

"You are bewildered, poor child—and no wonder! But you don't understand what you are saying. That phrase has no meaning except in law, and means in law only that, as you say, you cannot inherit. But, except for that, nothing is changed, there is no difference; you are the same to her, to me, as ever . . . as we ever thought you."

"No, no! it is that you are too kind to tell me the truth, Ethert. This is the shame Mamma said—might well say—was worse than death! Ah, do not touch me!" and, unexpectedly drawing herself from his arm, she slid down to the ground, and, crouching there, hid her face on the sofa beside his knee; still half-consciously feeling safety, shelter in nearness to him, trusting his compassion if she could neither

believe in his affection nor any longer dare to desire it. "Ethert, how could you take—such a wife? And I ought to have been grateful that you would own me at all, I should have been thankful for the shelter of your roof, for your silence even—and I was so wicked, so presumptuous that I was not satisfied even with your name. And you accepted the burden of my disgrace!—you, to whom all belonged, could submit to receive all from me, to treat me as the heiress even between ourselves—to be told that you had married me for that, and never to answer! And all the time I had no right—and all was yours, and if you had given me anything it was—not a cousin's kindness, but a stranger's charity! How could you let me be so insolent, so ungrateful? how could you let me fret and complain and reproach you in my heart, and never be provoked to speak the truth; never warn me that I was far, far more your debtor, your dependent, than Meta; never tell me that I owed to your charity not only a home but the position, the name you would not let me lose? Yes! and—and you could propose to send her away, her whom you do like—and thank me so kindly, so earnestly, for

giving her what was yours, as I knew even then, to give or withhold! How could you, Ethert? knowing all the time that I was not fit to be her companion, that I was something lower than a peasant or a slave!"

"Look up, Ivy," taking her hands, "and don't talk such utter nonsense. What has happened, after all? What is it you have learnt? Will you give me the letter Meta says you have received?"

She released her hand and felt for it instinctively where without her knowledge Meta had at once placed it. Then, as he took it from her, she sank down again once more, hiding her face in her hands. He glanced over the letter, and with difficulty repressed a bitter imprecation.

"Well, Ivy, what is it? Simply, at worst, that your father, having a wife from whom a cruel law refused to release him—a wife who could be no wife—made a second marriage that, as the law stands, was not legal."

"That, as the letter says, my mother was not his wife, nor we his children! And I dared to complain, to think it hard that I was punished as I was; and you knew all the time that whatever you chose to inflict, whatever condition

you had made, I must have submitted. You let me speak as if it were too cruel to be humbled—if you should show how you shrank from me—before your mother; and you were so careful to spare me. Ah, Ethert,” she continued, after a pause, looking up for one moment into his face, “I deserve this. I thought, I am afraid I called you hard—and all the time you were so merciful, so tender; and you never spoke! But Providence is just, and He chose that I should be humbled to the very dust in spite of all your care. No wonder you disliked to see me—you could not bear to touch me; and that one word I thought so terribly harsh and cruel was simply just—the only just word you ever spoke to me. How could you help loathing in your home, with the name of your wife, a——”

He silenced her this time by force, laying his hand gently but firmly on her lips.

“I never used such a word, Ivy! How can you? At any rate, I am a gentleman; I could not so speak to any woman who had not dishonoured womanhood itself.”

“You did not say ‘I loathe you,’ Ethert; you felt, but you were too gentle to say it. I don’t

think you would have shown it more than you could help ; and I have only been sure of it, felt it in all your ways, since you were ill and could not be always on your guard. But you said that girls must loathe such a marriage even more than you did."

Ethert remembered the idea, though he could not recall the words.

"You did not understand me, Ivy, dearest. The thought was one that has never occurred to you. But I did feel, I always owned that, but for one thing, you were much more cruelly wronged than I. I knew that, soon or late, you would feel this, would insist on a release ; that the only redress I could give you was to claim nothing in right of a forced union and of unwilling vows."

"Mine were not unwilling, Ethert ; for I knew nothing, and I thought you consented of your own will. Surely you will believe me ? If I had guessed the truth, or even a little part of it—if I had known that you were giving all and receiving nothing—no, no ! far worse than nothing !—I never would, could have done such a cruel, wicked,

heartless thing. Oh, Ethert, you do not think that, even in terror of this, I could have been so utterly selfish?"

"Remember, my child, I chose my course deliberately, knowing all this. When I chose it I insisted that you should *not* know. I would not have you frightened into what you might repent, and I would not take a wife shamed, humbled, feeling—as you seem to feel now. Darling, I have been much to blame, or you never should have known it. I ought to have paid anything rather than provoke the cruel, cowardly spite that has told you, and told you in such a brutal way. But I was angry at his threats, his trying to extort money from your mother. I would not be bullied, and Brand advised me to resist; but I feel now how selfish I have been."

"Selfish? You! Ethert, it is best that I know the truth, know all I owe to you: why you hated your marriage, why you despised me, shrank from me . . . why you—loathe me."

"Hush, hush, Ivy, *ma petite*! In mercy to me, hush! It is *not* true."

But Ivy took the tears in his eyes, the trem-

bling of his voice, as mere pity, and persisted.

“But I know, and you know it is true; how could it be otherwise? But, Ethert, what can I do? Can I release you in any way now—except? I hoped, till to-day, I thought—when I had atoned—no! I could not do that; but when you were too sorry for me to go on—I thought you were angry, resentful; and that when you would see and know how it hurt I hoped you would forgive some day, if it were only at the end if only I might have one day of happiness if only once you would say, ‘Ivy, I forgive,’ that I might feel your arms round me before I died. But now—oh, Ethert, tell me, what can I do? I am such a coward I am afraid to I dare not kill myself and is it right? Ethert, tell me to do so, and I will try to obey. I hope God will forgive me, if I obey you. Will you not?”—for Ethert simply could not command voice to answer. “I hope it is so dreadful surely I cannot bear this long surely I shall not live long to make you unhappy? Ethert, if I die soon, you will forgive?”

It is not a year of your life I have cost you yet. Will you not then, at the last, try to forget for one day what I am talk to me, and kiss me, at the very last, as if I were—the cousin you used to love—to make so happy? Or—oh, Ethert! I never thought of that—the ‘one thing’ that made it so cruel. You loved someone, and—is she lost to you now? Ethert, then you never will, you never can forgive! then you will hate me to the end, and even after I”

The thought overpowered what little self-command, what little power of endurance was left her, and she sank to the floor at his feet. Then, stooping, Ethert lifted her perforce in his arms, drew her on his knee, and held her crushed and strained to his breast for more than a minute, before he could command power of reply.

“Ivy, my own! my darling, my wife! No, no! my child, if I had a dream, a fancy, it was a dream and no more; and never half so dear even to my fancy as you are now to my heart. Forgive, forget it, love, as I have forgotten. Try to forgive, darling, all I have

made you suffer; try to love but half as well as you have forced me at last to love you!"

"Ethert, you forget; you are so tender, so sorry for me. You should not give me a name that shames you so; you must not say what you cannot feel. You should not stoop to touch—what you have always known me to be—what I know myself now."

For the first time since their betrothal, Ethert bent his head till his lips touched the face half hidden on his shoulder, and silenced her with passionate kisses.

"Hush! hush! darling! I cannot bear to hear you. Forgive me, my own! Do you think the hardest heart could be proof against such patience, such submission, such tenderness as yours has been? Indeed, Ivy, before to-day you had taught me to love you as I never thought to love any woman—if I had been able to tell you so. If I am sorry that the truth is known, it is for your sake only. For myself, I should be well pleased to have occasion to say, to prove that I am as proud as you have taught me to be fond of you! My darling! if it seemed a sacrifice at first, it will be requited

a thousand-fold, if only I may hope from your duty the pardon I could hardly ask even from a heart like yours ; if you will let me try to teach you to love me, as I have learned to love the wife that a Providence far wiser than my own choice has given me."

"Forgive you ! Learn to love you ! If only it did not so dishonour you—do you not know how I have loved you since—ah ! Ethert, when did I *not* love you ? And, if you are not ashamed of my love—— Forgive ? when I know what you have done, what you have borne, and all to save me this ! And if you had not told me that your wife's shame must be your own—I know you would feel this almost as I do ! Forgive you ? Ethert, if you will love me only a little,—if I may cling to you for shelter when people look hardly on me, if you can hold me before them as you did when I was so foolishly afraid and distrustful before your mother ; and if—if you mean that I shall be your wife in something more than the name I had no right to, that I owe to you—what have I to wish, to ask for ? If I were to die now, with your first kiss on my lips, held close for

the first time to your heart—is it not worth all I have suffered? If you can forget . . . the shame——”

“My darling! if only I can make amends to you, can make you happy! Ivy, the world will care very little when or of whom my wife, the mistress of Glynnehurst, was born. I, who have known it so long, never honoured you the less, and do not love you the less now. If you will put the thought out of your mind, no one will ever dare suggest it, and very soon no one will remember it. Try, darling, to forget the past, only to believe that I wish, only let me try to make your future happy.”

“Ethert, do you mean that? Will you treat me as you are doing now? You will not change again, you will not thrust me away, now you have once held me to your heart? Then—what else do I want, what else can signify? What do I care what others may say, unless it hurts you? Should I mind, while you care for me, what all the world might think? Would it matter to me if I never saw any one, if no one would speak to me, so only *you* speak kindly? Only, may I ask you one thing, Ethert, one favour? If I am in fault again, if you are

displeased with me, do what you like, only—you will not punish me in that way any more? Ah! thank you, Ethert; you are so good to me!”

The effect of these words, the culmination of her all-enduring, all-forgiving love and loyalty, astonished and almost terrified her. Ethert had been worn and overstrained for weeks by protracted mental irritation. The physical fatigue and exhaustion of the day had tried his nerves to the uttermost. The mental shock given by the sudden production of the insulting paragraph, the prolonged and intense anxiety for her during his homeward ride, had ill prepared him to endure any further trial; and every incident of the present painful scene had still further strained and shaken a spirit naturally sensitive, and now wrought up to the extremest tension. He could no longer command himself in presence of the accumulated evidence of his wife's suffering and humiliation, endured with such exquisite patience—with a tenderness for his feelings even while her own were so cruelly tortured, a forbearance not only from spoken reproach but even from resentful thought, which was not

only inexpressibly touching, but appealed more forcibly than the most righteous complaint could have done to his own memory and conscience. Gradually, but none the less keenly, he realized all that she had borne so patiently up to the moment when she had last pleaded and first seemed to hope for his "forgiveness"—conceived her cruel, hopeless isolation when the instantly succeeding shock revealed to her the meaning of her sacrifice and the extent of his, and seemed to account not only for her marriage, but for his aversion. Her submissive gratitude, while her spirit still quivered under so deep a wound to womanly pride, to her tenacious affection, was more than the instincts of manhood could endure. Ethert fairly broke down, and Ivy was utterly confounded by the outburst of emotion which all his strength could no longer control, the actual tears, the hardly suppressed sobs that almost choked his struggling, half articulated words.

"Good to you? My darling! my poor child!—how cruel, how heartless I have been, and—and if you loved me after all . . . and through all . . ."

Such a burst of passion, such a storm of uncontrollable feeling from Ethert, her ideal of stern self-repression, Ethert, whose self-command even the piteous horror of his mother's death had not shaken,—she had not seen the re-action when, after calming her own grief and quieting Meta's convulsive agitation, he had been able to lock himself in his study,—Ivy could not understand, could hardly believe. For a moment she was simply frightened. Then the ruling instinct of that sweet, generous nature—ever possessing a source of strength and composure at hand in its absolute unselfishness—regained its ascendancy. Shyness is ever self-conscious; but Ivy always forgot herself when the distress of another was in question. Ethert's softest words, his fondest caresses had not given her the courage and confidence she unconsciously found in his tears—the courage to soothe, the assurance that *now* her tenderness could not be unwelcome or unneeded.

“Ethert, dear Ethert, how can you say so; what could you have done? You could not love me, and you would not lie. Remember, you never

gave me a rough word, an angry look—no man could have been more gentle, more considerate to a wife so forced upon him. Oh, no, Ethert; you have been kind, most kind!—and now, if only you can care for me . . . not because you pity me . . .”

As the last words were faltered almost inaudibly, the hands that had clung to him with something of the old childlike, trusting affection had fallen back, the eyes whose earnest, pleading gaze had been more eloquent than her speech were once more hidden by the drooping lids; but her tone, look, touch had done their wifely part, had calmed and comforted as they sought to do.

“Care for you—my own, my darling!”

He could say no more; but the voice, trembling with tenderness, vibrating to the unmistakable note of true passion, conveyed more than fluent words could have expressed to Ivy's inmost heart. Shyly as tenderly her arm stole round his neck, her hand sought his; and the timid, coaxing caress was answered by one more passionate embrace, by renewed kisses such as Ethert's lips had never given, such as

had never touched hers before this evening.

"Ethert," she said, after a few minutes' silence, low and softly, in a tone of pensive perplexity, "I wonder—if . . . *Why* did you—marry me?"

Her face was half hidden from his eyes as her lips murmured the question in his ear.

"It was the only way, my own; it was impossible to give up my rights in silence as I wished, and to question yours was to disclose all. Indeed, love, I told you truly—there was no other way."

"None for me, Ethert; but for you?" repeating unconsciously the very question she had asked at the time.

"None for either, darling. What could I do? Could I rob a young girl of name and fortune—shame her that I might plunder her—and that girl my own only cousin?"

"Rob!—it was your own; and," in a tone of eager though momentary gladness, "it is all yours, always was yours, and you can never break my heart again by telling me it is mine! I have nothing—nothing but what you give me, Ethert; I am so glad of that!"

He could not answer for very shame, remembering the contrast she had not meant to suggest. That that contrast occurred to her was presently evident in her change of colour and look of manifest embarrassment. Presently:—

“Ethert, was that all? Did you really sacrifice all, only that people might not talk of me, knowing they would talk almost as ill of you?”

“I have often asked myself that question, Ivy. No! if the world’s talk had been all, I don’t know—I might have flinched—have grudged If I could have done it myself, Ivy, for such a reason, I could not have taken on myself to tell *you* that it ought to be done. But when I sacrificed your right, your happiness, it was to keep the secret from yourself; I could not bear that you should be shocked, wounded by the truth; I could not have you humbled in your own eyes.”

“And yet,” she said, half enquiringly, half pensively, “you did not love me? Then—why what love could be truer, tenderer, could understand better, could care more for me?—who could have done, have given more for a girl than you did for me? Ethert, would you have done it for any girl?”

“I am afraid not, Ivy. But what other girl could have been what you were to me? If you had spent seventeen years in watching, tending one exquisite lily, the whitest, purest, loveliest in the world, could you have endured to see it soiled, crushed, defaced?—and my lily could feel the stain.”

“And you say that was not love?” she repeated, slowly, ponderingly. “Ethert, what could I do for you more than you have done for me? And yet—do you not know I love you?”

He could not quite restrain a slight smile, though thoroughly aware that her perplexity was wholly sincere. It was of the very essence of his peculiar creed that such women as he could think worthy of love need never realise—that a girl so innocent, stainless, chaste in thought as his young bride would not conceive, could not understand—the distinction between the passion and the affection which, in the highest mood of both, are called by the same sacred name.

“Ethert,” she implored presently, in a yet more earnest tone and manner, hesitating, al-

most faltering, with feeling as deep, anxiety as eager, as had moved her at any other moment of this trying day, "will you promise to answer one question truly, whether it hurt me or not—quite truly, frankly, from your heart?"

"Must I, dearest? Well, I think I can trust you not to ask what you should not, and not to give the sting of misconstruction to my answer. Yes, Ivy; at least, I will answer truly or not at all."

"Then, Ethert, now that the truth is known—now that Glynnehurst is yours, and I am nothing to it or to you, but——"

"My cousin and the daughter of the house; my darling, my companion, from your cradle upwards! No, Ivy; you cannot shake yourself free either of our cousinhood or the memories of our past!"

"As if I wished! But—is that true?—are we really cousins? Then, Ethert, forget your wife, and answer your cousin truly, loyally, in the spirit of her question. If you could be released—free in conscience and in law—if, these things known, you could make me safe, could give me a sister's place and portion . . . Eth-

ert, would you—not out of pity, not from any secret motive . . . would you wish—would you ask to-day . . . what you have never asked yet—what you refused to ask from your cousin *then?*”

Even yet prompt to fear that she had offended, Ivy shivered, coloured, trembled as he gently but quickly put her aside, disengaged himself, and rose from the sofa on which he had seated her. But a sudden warm pulse of wifely joy and womanly pride thrilled all her frame—throbbed in every vein, made every nerve quiver, and seemed to herself to flush face, neck, and bosom with almost painful heat—when Ethert, kneeling before her, rested his left arm around her waist, clasped with his right hand that which wore the golden badge of her nominal matronhood, and looking up into her eyes with all the passion of love, tenderness, reverence that—under the impulse of a first true attachment—could speak from the heart and through the eyes of manhood, answered :

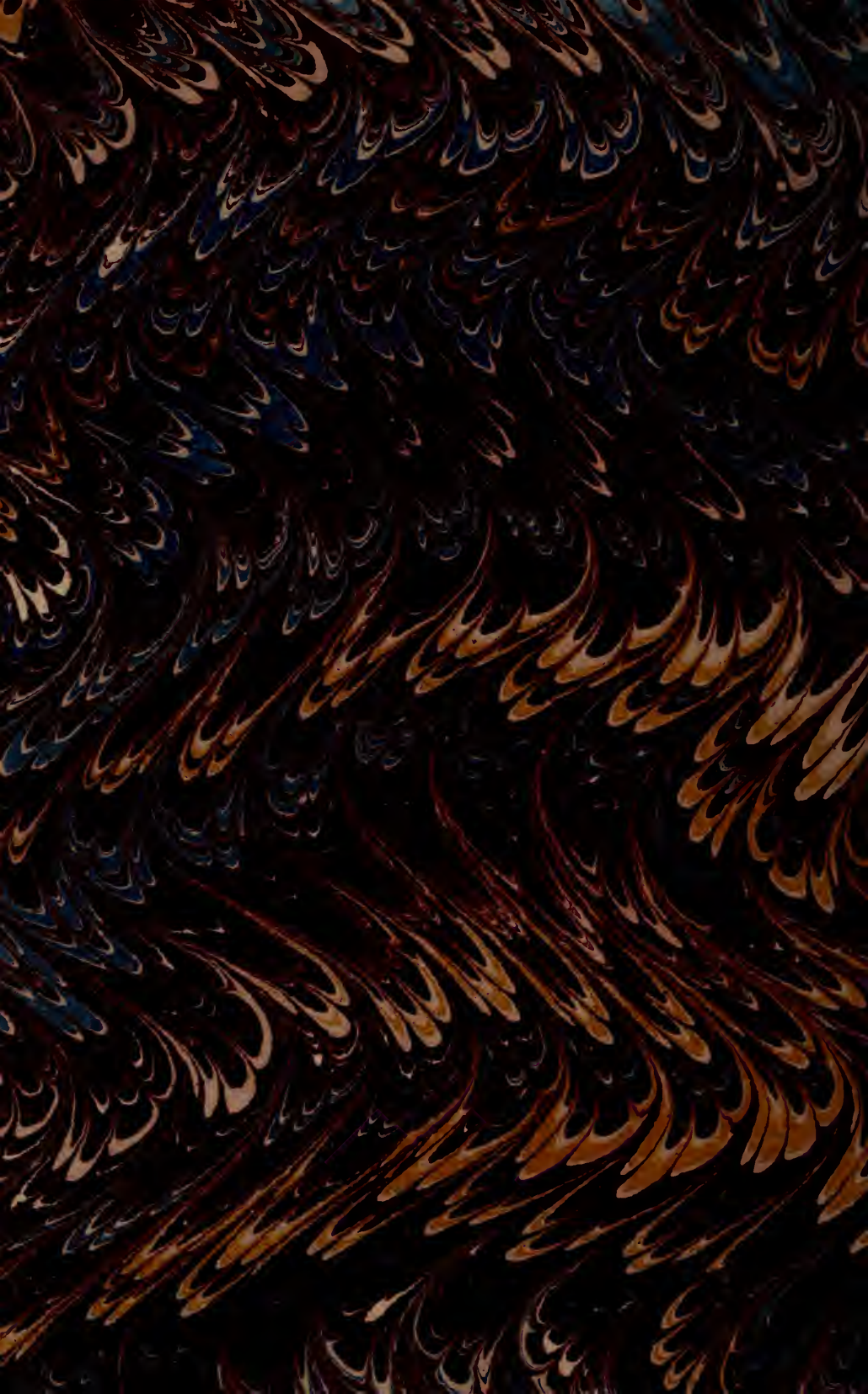
“ I love you, Ivy—love you as never in dream or vision or real life, never in fact or fancy, did I think it possible to love another ;—as I never

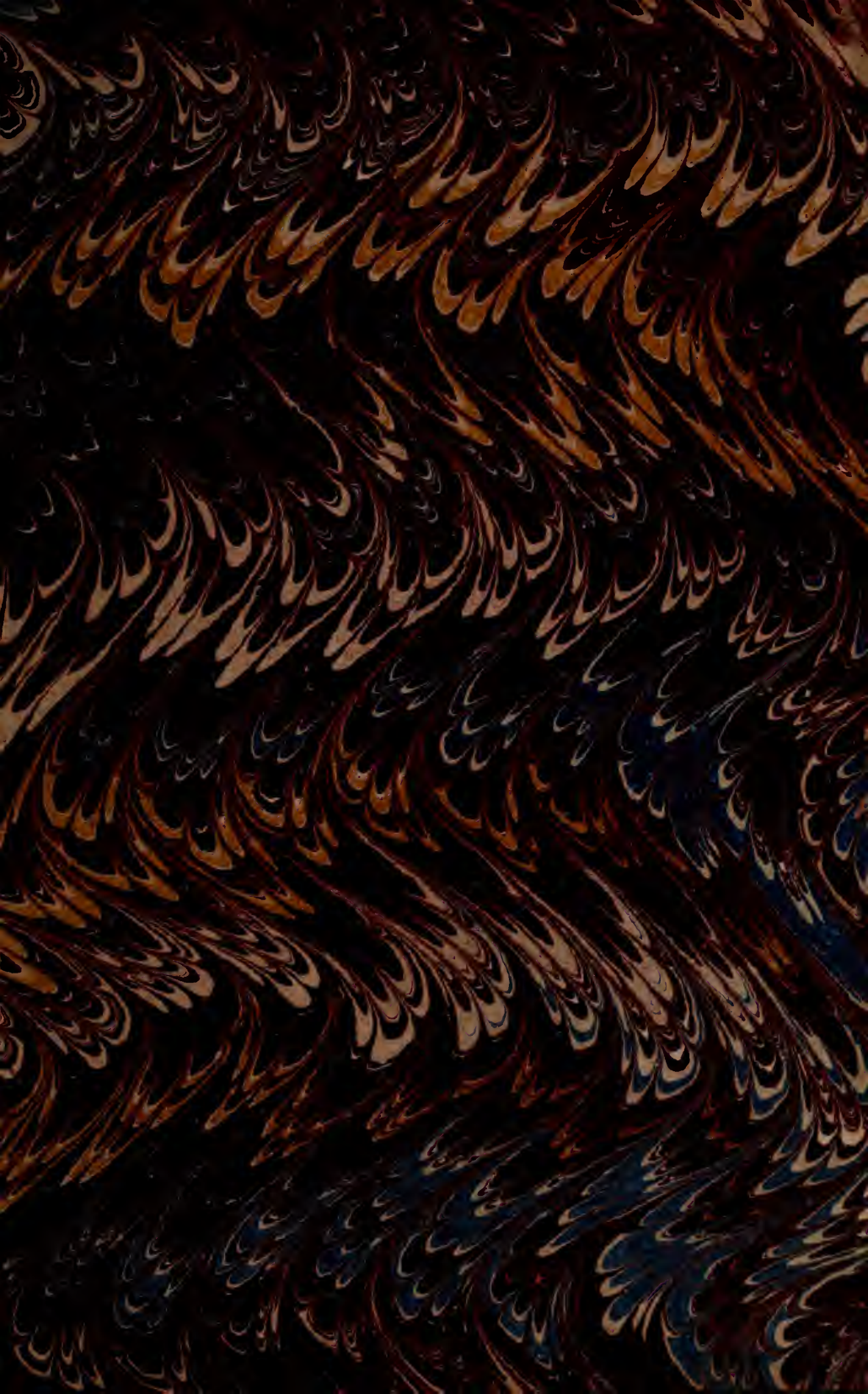
thought any other girl could deserve to be loved! Love me, cousin—for my sake, not for yours; be my wife in heart and truth as in name and honour—and I shall thank God from my soul for such love, such happiness, as no choice of my own could ever have given me.”

Far too much affected to speak, her eyes bright with the sweetest tears they had ever known, her cheeks suffused with their soft rose blush, she bent forward, resting the little hand he left disengaged on his shoulder; her heart now at length content, confident, satisfied. Every restless doubt appeased, every aching wound healed at last, it was perfect, absolute happiness to resign herself to the embrace, now wholly passionate and nowise pitying, that clasped her closely, eagerly to his breast. No words could pass her lips for many minutes.

“Ah, Ethert—you do love me—again! I am so happy, now.”

THE END.





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